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Gastrointestinal Stromal Tumor - GIST - Questions to Ask the Doctor [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 11/2013

ON THIS PAGE: You will find some questions to ask your doctor or other members of your health care team, to help you better understand your diagnosis, treatment plan, and overall care. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen.

Talking often with the doctor is important [3] to make informed decisions about your health care. These suggested questions are a starting point to help you learn more about your cancer care and treatment. You are also encouraged to ask additional questions that are important to you. You may want to print this list and bring it to your next appointment, or [download Cancer.Net's free mobile app](#) [4] for an e-list and other interactive tools to manage your care.

General questions:

- Where is the tumor located?
- Can you explain my pathology report (laboratory test results) to me?
- Should my tumor be tested for genetic changes?
- How aggressive is the tumor?
- Should I be seeing a GIST specialist?
- What are my treatment options?
- What clinical trials are open to me?
- What is the goal of each treatment? Is it to eliminate the cancer, help me feel better, or both?
- What treatment plan do you recommend? Why?
- Do I need treatment right away?
- Who will be part of my health care team, and what does each member do?
- Who will be coordinating my overall treatment and follow-up care?
- What are the possible side effects of this treatment, both in the short term and the long term?
- How will this treatment affect my daily life? Will I be able to work, exercise, or perform my usual activities?
- Could this treatment affect my sex life? If so, how and for how long?
- Could this treatment affect my ability to become pregnant or have children? If so, should I talk with a fertility specialist before treatment begins?

- If I'm worried about managing the costs related to my medical care, who can help me with these concerns?
- Whom should I call for questions or problems?

Questions to ask before surgery:

- Can you describe this surgery to me?
- What are the possible side effects of this surgery? How will they be treated?
- Will I need to stay in the hospital for this surgery? For how long?
- Why are you recommending this specific type of surgery for me?
- What is the goal of surgery?

Questions about targeted therapy/imatinib (Gleevec):

- If I have surgery, should I take Gleevec before surgery? What dosage? For how long?
- If I have surgery, should I take Gleevec after surgery? What dosage? For how long?
- What factors determine how effective Gleevec is likely to be?
- What are the possible side effects? How will they be treated?
- What can be done if Gleevec stops working? Can I receive Sutent in that case?
- What can be done if Sutent stops working? Can I receive Stivarga in that case?

Questions to ask before radiation therapy:

- What kind of radiation therapy is recommended?
- What is the goal of radiation therapy?
- What does the preparation for this treatment involve?
- What possible side effects can I expect from this treatment? How will they be treated?

After treatment, including surgery:

- What are the chances that the tumor will return?
- What follow-up tests do I need, and how often do I need them?
- What support services are available to me? To my family?

The next section offers some more resources that may be helpful to you. Use the menu on the side of your screen to select Additional Resources, or you can select another section, to continue reading this guide.

Links:

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/gastrointestinal-stromal-tumor-gist/questions-ask-doctor>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25171>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/29951>