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Sarcoma - Questions to Ask the Doctor [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the Cancer.Net Editorial Board [2], 01/2013

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.

General questions:

- What type of sarcoma has been diagnosed?
- Has this diagnosis been reviewed by a pathologist who is experienced in the diagnosis and classification of sarcoma?
- What does my diagnosis mean?
- Where is the tumor located?
- What is the sarcoma?s stage and grade? What does this mean?
- Can you explain my pathology report (laboratory test results) to me?
- Should I see a sarcoma specialist?
- Was my case discussed in a multidisciplinary conference? What does this mean?
- What are my treatment options?
- What clinical trials are open to me?
- 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 treatment plan do you recommend? Why?
- What is the goal of each treatment?
- 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, and 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 cancer treatment begins?
- If I?m worried about managing the costs related to my cancer care, who can help me with these concerns?

- What support services are available to me? To my family?
- Whom do I call for questions or problems?

Questions to ask before surgery:

- Should I have a biopsy before surgery?
- What will happen during this surgery?
- Will the surgery be performed in en-bloc resection? What does this mean?
- How experienced is this surgeon with sarcoma? How many sarcoma operations has he or she done in the past year?
- What are the possible side effects of my surgery, both in the short term and long term?
- Will I need to stay in the hospital for this surgery? For how long?
- Does the stage of cancer affect the decision for surgery? How?
- Do I need chemotherapy and/or radiation before the surgery? After the surgery?
- Will I need rehabilitative services after the surgery?

Questions to ask before radiation therapy:

- What type of radiation therapy is recommended?
- How experienced is the radiation oncologist with sarcoma? How many people with sarcoma has he or she treated in the past year?
- How many treatments will I need, and how long will each one take?
- What side effects can I expect from this treatment?
- What can be done to prevent or to treat the side effects?

Questions to ask before chemotherapy or targeted therapy:

- What type of medication is recommended?
- How experienced is the medical oncologist with sarcoma? How many people with sarcoma has he or she treated in the past year?
- Are there other chemotherapy or targeted treatments available?
- Should I consider a clinical trial?
- How many treatments will I need, and how long will each take?
- What side effects can I expect from this treatment?
- What can be done to prevent or manage these side effects?

After treatment:

- What are the chances that the sarcoma will return?
- What follow-up tests do I need, and how often do I need them?

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/sarcoma/questions-ask-doctor
[2] http://www.cancer.net/about-us

[3]
http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Newly+Diagnosed/Questions+to+Ask+the+Doctor/Questions+to+Ask+the+Doct