

Finding a New Doctor [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board \[2\]](#), 03/2016

At some point, you may need to search for a new doctor for your cancer treatment and care. You may be moving to a new location or changing health insurance plans, or perhaps your doctor is moving or retiring. No matter the reason, the idea of changing oncologists may be upsetting if you developed a strong relationship with your current or previous doctor. It may be overwhelming to think about finding a doctor you like, reviewing the details of your diagnosis and previous treatment with a new doctor, or getting to know new office staff. Although it may take time to create a new relationship with a doctor, you can take steps to find a new oncologist you trust and you feel comfortable with.

Locating a new oncologist

First, make a list of potential doctors. Consider using these strategies to create that list:

- Ask your current oncologist and primary care physician to recommend doctors in your area or in the area where you are moving.
- Call your health insurance plan's member services line to ask for a list of oncologists. Or, search the insurance plan's website, if available.
- Call local hospitals and ask about their physician referral service. You can also review the [list of National Cancer Institute-designated cancer centers \[3\]](#). Your nearest cancer center can provide information on oncologists who practice at that center.

- Ask for recommendations from family members, friends, members of a [support group](#) [4], or other people you know who have had cancer.
- Search online physician directories. The American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) provides a free, searchable [database of ASCO member oncologists](#) [5]. Other medical associations, such as the [American Medical Association](#) [6] and the [American College of Surgeons](#) [7], have online databases of doctors as well.

Narrowing your list

Once you have a list of potential oncologists, consider the following questions to focus your choices:

- What are the doctor's credentials? Is he or she board certified?
- What is the doctor's education, training, and number of years in practice?
- What is the doctor's experience with your type of cancer?
- How many patients with your type of cancer does the doctor see each year?
- Does the doctor participate in your insurance plan?
- Is the doctor accepting new patients?
- How convenient are the office hours and location?
- Does the office have supportive staff?
- How easy is it to get an appointment or speak with the doctor?
- Who handles emergencies when the doctor is unavailable?

You may be able to get some of this information from your referral. You can also contact the doctor's office directly. Consider scheduling consultations with some of the oncologists to meet

them and their office staff. If you currently live too far away to meet in person, you may be able to talk with the doctor on the phone. Keep in mind that you may be charged for the doctor's time and that the charge may not be covered by your health insurance.

In addition to getting answers to practical questions, you will get a sense of the doctor's communication and practice styles. Take note of how comfortable you feel with each oncologist. Note whether the doctor talks to you in a way you can understand and whether he or she encourages and answers your questions.

All the information you gather will help you decide which doctor is right for you. Trust your instincts. However, even if you feel you made the right decision, it may take time for you and your new oncologist to develop a comfortable relationship. And remember that, if you are not happy with your choice after some time, you have the tools to switch to a different doctor.

Providing information your new oncologist will need

Once you have chosen a new oncologist, you will need to transfer your medical records from your current doctor's office. Ask the office staff what procedures you should follow. Usually, you need to give written permission allowing the office to copy and transfer your records. You may also want to ask for a copy of your records for your own reference. They may be available in different formats, such as a CD or flash drive. Some offices may charge a fee to copy your records for personal use.

More Information

[The Cancer Care Team](#) [8]

[Choosing a Doctor for Your Cancer Care](#) [9]

[Managing Your Care](#) [10]

Additional Resource

National Cancer Institute: [How To Find a Doctor or Treatment Facility If You Have Cancer](#) [11]

Links

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/es/node/24525>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/es/node/51>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/navigating-cancer-care/cancer-basics/cancer-care-team/find-nci-designated-cancer-center>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25383>

[5] <http://www.cancer.net/find-cancer-doctor>

[6] <https://apps.ama-assn.org/doctorfinder/recaptcha.jsp>

[7] <https://www.facs.org/education/patient-education/patient-resources>

[8] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24932>

[9] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24949>

[10] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25015>

[11] <http://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/managing-care/services/doctor-facility-fact-sheet>