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Choosing a Cancer Treatment Facility [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 02/2013

 [Listen to the Cancer.Net Podcast: Choosing a Cancer Treatment Facility](#)[3], adapted from this feature

Cancer is a disease that requires specialized treatment, so it is important to find a treatment center that offers the services, resources, and health care professionals to meet your specific needs.

How to find a treatment facility

The process of finding a treatment facility and [finding an oncologist](#) [4] (a doctor who specializes in treating cancer) are usually closely linked. Some people first identify an oncologist and then choose a treatment facility based on where that doctor practices. Others identify a facility that specializes in the type of cancer they have been diagnosed with and then find a doctor who is on staff at that facility. The staff at the chosen treatment facility, including nurses, physician assistants, social workers, and technicians, will become part of your [health care team](#) [5], which will be led by your oncologist. Learn more about [choosing a doctor](#) [6].

Insurance is another factor that may influence your decision because your options may be limited to facilities that participate in your insurance program. Your insurance company can provide a list of approved facilities.

Even within these limits, you may have a number of different facilities to choose from. Your doctor can help you think through the options based on your type of cancer, the type of treatment you will likely receive, and your personal needs. It may also help to talk with other patients to learn about their experiences.

Here are some factors to consider before choosing a cancer treatment facility:

- How much experience does the facility have in treating your type of cancer, and how successful has it been with those treatments?
- How close is the facility to your home or office?
- What support services does the facility offer to people with cancer and their families? Will you have access to social workers, dietitians, and other members of an expanded health care

team?

- Does the facility offer clinical trials [7] (research studies involving people)?
- If you'll be traveling a long distance to get treatment, or if friends or family members will need to travel to be with you during treatment, does the facility offer a place for you and your family to stay? Is it close to airports, hotels, and restaurants?

Accredited cancer treatment centers

A good place to start your search is among accredited cancer treatment centers. For example, there are more than 60 centers recognized by the National Cancer Institute's (NCI) Cancer Center Program. These centers, which all meet specific standards, are classified into two categories:

Cancer Centers. Cancer Centers integrate research activities across three major areas: laboratory research, clinical research, and population-based research. Although most of these facilities provide care and services for patients with cancer, some only conduct laboratory research.

Comprehensive Cancer Centers. In addition to the activities conducted by Cancer Centers, Comprehensive Cancer Centers also have extensive community outreach and educational programs.

NCI also has cooperative groups, which are large networks of researchers, doctors, and other health care professionals, at public and private institutions who conduct multi-center, large-scale, phase III cancer clinical trials across the country. Review and search a complete list of NCI-designated cancer centers and cooperative groups [8].

Additionally, the following national organizations offer their own accreditations of treatment centers:

The American College of Surgeons (ACS). Through its Commission on Cancer (CoC), ACS has accredited more than 1,500 cancer programs. CoC-accredited treatment centers offer a range of services, including diagnostic, treatment, rehabilitation, and support services. In addition, ACS standards promote multidisciplinary cooperation between oncologists and other specialists at the treatment centers. Learn more about CoC-accredited cancer programs [9].

The Joint Commission. This group evaluates general health care programs. It offers "Quality Check" performance reports for thousands of programs and organizations it has accredited in the United States. Accredited programs have met the commission's standards for the quality and safety of patient care. Review the Joint Commission's performance report for a specific treatment center [10].

Types of treatment settings

Once you have chosen a treatment facility, it is important to understand that you may receive your medical care in either an inpatient or an outpatient setting, depending on your treatment plan. For inpatient care, the patient is admitted to the hospital to be closely monitored during treatment and initial recovery. Outpatient treatment does not require hospital admission. It can

take place at a hospital building, a clinic, or a doctor's office. Talk with your doctor to learn whether you will need inpatient or outpatient treatment.

More Information

[Newly Diagnosed: First Steps to Take \[11\]](#)

[Making Decisions About Cancer Treatment \[12\]](#)

[Traveling for Cancer Care \[13\]](#)

[Managing Your Care \[14\]](#)

Additional Resources

[NCI: How to Find a Doctor or Treatment Facility If You Have Cancer \[15\]](#)

[Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality: Choosing Quality Care \[16\]](#)

Links:

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/navigating-cancer-care/managing-your-care/choosing-cancer-treatment-facility>

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

[3] http://www.cancer.net/sites/cancer.net/files/Choosing_a_Cancer_Treatment_Facility.mp3

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

[5] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24957>

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

[7] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24863>

[8] <http://www.cancer.net/publications-and-resources/support-and-resource-links/general-cancer-organizations-and-resources/cancer-centers-coop-groups>

[9] <http://www.facs.org/cancerprogram/index.html>

[10] <http://www.qualitycheck.org/consumer/searchQCR.aspx>

[11] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24956>

[12] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24582>

[13] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24706>

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

[15] <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Therapy/doctor-facility>

[16] <http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/qualcare.html>