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## **[Deciding to Participate in a Clinical Trial](#) [1]**

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 01/2016



Watch the [Cancer.Net Video: Cancer Clinical Trials as a Treatment Option, with Mary Lou Smith, MD](#) [3], adapted from this content.

Deciding to participate in a clinical trial is a complex decision. For some patients, a clinical trial may be the best treatment option available, despite the uncertainty of the outcome. Other patients volunteer for clinical trials because they know that these studies make progress in treating cancer. Even if patients do not benefit directly, their participation may benefit future patients with cancer. This helps some people feel that they are making a difference and gives them a positive feeling.

More than 60% of children with cancer are treated as part of a clinical trial. Because cancer in children is rare, doctors rely on clinical trials to plan the most effective treatments. Virtually every cancer treatment available today—for children and adults—is the direct result of clinical research.

### **Learning about the process**

The following steps may help you decide if you want to participate in a clinical trial:

- Learn about the types of clinical trials that are being done and how they are designed.

- Talk with your doctor about which clinical trials might be right for you.
- Find out the risks and benefits of participating in the clinical trial.
- Learn what clinical trial costs you will be responsible for.
- Make sure to get [answers to all of your questions from your doctor](#) [4].

Talk about this information and how you feel about it with your doctor, nurse, family members, and friends. This will help you determine what is best for you. Sometimes, other patients who have been in a clinical trial also may provide helpful insight.

## **Benefits and risks of clinical trials**

Joining a clinical trial has both pros and cons. Some people decide there are too many risks. Others are willing to take those risks to try a new treatment.

Here is how participating in a clinical trial can help you:

- You may gain access to new treatments that are not available to the public.
- You will get expert medical care at leading health care facilities during the clinical trial.
- You will be helping others by contributing to medical research.

Here are some of the potential risks:

- The medications and treatments involved may have side effects.
- The treatment may not work.
- The clinical trial may require more of your time and focus. For example, you may need to travel to the study site, stay in the hospital, or be willing to undergo additional treatments.
- If the treatment works for you, it may not be available to you right away once the clinical trial is finished.

For more insight, [watch people who have participated in clinical trials discuss their experiences](#) [5].

## More Information

[PRE-ACT: Preparatory Education About Clinical Trials](#) [6]

[Finding a Clinical Trial](#) [7]

[Patient Safety and Informed Consent](#) [8]

[Making Decisions About Cancer Treatment](#) [9]

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## Links

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/navigating-cancer-care/how-cancer-treated/clinical-trials/deciding-participate-clinical-trial>

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

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/27066>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24958>

[5] <http://www.cancerprogress.net/stories>

[6] <http://www.cancer.net/navigating-cancer-care/how-cancer-treated/clinical-trials/pre-act>

[7] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24878>

[8] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24879>

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