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Cancer Terms: Treatment [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 08/2015

Adjuvant therapy: Treatment given after the main treatment to reduce the chance of cancer coming back by destroying any remaining cancer cells. It usually refers to chemotherapy, radiation therapy, hormone therapy, and/or immunotherapy given after surgery.

Bone marrow transplant: A medical procedure in which diseased bone marrow is replaced by healthy bone marrow from a volunteer donor. Learn more about [bone marrow transplantation](#) [3].

Chemotherapy: The use of drugs to kill cancer cells. Learn more about [chemotherapy](#) [4].

Clinical trial: A research study that tests new treatments and/or prevention methods to find out whether they are safe, effective, and possibly better than the current standard of care (the best known treatment). Learn more about [clinical trials](#) [5].

Complementary medicine. A diverse group of treatments, techniques, and products that are used in addition to standard cancer treatments. Learn more about [types of complementary therapies](#) [6].

Hormone therapy: Treatment that removes, blocks, or adds hormones to destroy or slow the growth of cancer cells. It is also called hormonal therapy or endocrine therapy.

Integrative medicine. A combination of medical treatments for cancer and complementary therapies to help manage the symptoms and side effects of cancer. Learn more about [integrative medicine](#) [7].

Immunotherapy: A type of cancer treatment designed to boost the body's natural defenses to fight the cancer. It uses materials made either by the body or in a laboratory to improve, target, or restore immune system function. It may also be called biologic therapy. Learn more about [immunotherapy](#) [8].

Neoadjuvant therapy: Treatment given before the main treatment. It may include chemotherapy, radiation therapy, or hormone therapy given before surgery to shrink a tumor so that it is easier to remove.

Palliative care: Palliative care is any form of treatment that concentrates on reducing a patient's symptoms or treatment side effects, improving quality of life, and supporting patients and their families. It may also be called supportive care. Learn more about [palliative care](#) [9].

Placebo: An inactive drug or treatment in a clinical trial. Find out more about the current [use of placebos](#) [10] in cancer clinical trials.

Protocol: A formal, written action plan for how a clinical trial will be carried out. It states the goals and timeline of the study, who is eligible to participate, what treatments and tests will be given and how often, and what information will be gathered.

Radiation therapy: The use of high-energy x-rays or other particles to destroy cancer cells. The most common type of radiation treatment is called external-beam radiation therapy, which is radiation given from a machine outside the body. When radiation treatment is given using implants near the cancer cells, it is called internal radiation therapy or brachytherapy. Learn more about [radiation therapy](#) [11].

Regimen: A treatment plan that includes expected treatments and procedures, medications and their doses, the schedule of treatments, and how long the treatment will last.

Standard of care: Care that experts agree or guidelines show is the most appropriate and/or effective for a specific type and stage of cancer.

Surgery: The removal of cancerous tissue from the body through an operation. Learn more about [cancer surgery](#) [12].

Targeted treatment: Treatment that targets specific genes, proteins, or other molecules that contribute to cancer growth and survival. Learn more about [targeted treatments](#) [13].

More Information

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