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Translating Your Pathology Report

By law, you are entitled to a copy of your pathology report, and most hospitals will provide you with a copy free of charge. It's important to have a copy of your pathology report so you have documentation of your diagnosis, and this information will be helpful in researching your disease.

Below is a brief explanation that will clarify what each category involves.

Demographics: Includes information about you, such as your name, age, sex, and date of procedure.

Specimen: Describes the origin of the tissue samples.

Clinical history: A short medical history covering topics such as how your cancer was found.

Clinical diagnosis: Indicates the diagnosis doctors were expecting before your tissue was tested.

Procedure: How the tissue sample was removed.

Gross description: Description of the tissue sample(s), including the size, weight, and color of each sample.

Microscopic description: Describes the way cancer cells look under the microscope. A variety of sections may identify tumor characteristics, including grade, tumor margins, and pathologic stage.

Special tests or markers: Reports the results of tests that look for proteins, genes, and how fast the cells are growing. These findings are often contained in a separate report.

Summary: A pathologic diagnosis is made based on the information from the entire pathology report.