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Doctor, What Should I Do?

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The best choice for treatment depends on your desires, values, goals and personal risk-taking preferences.

For some people, the right choice is treatment with a goal of cure no matter the chance for cure (as long as there is some chance) and no matter the risks and costs of treatment. For others, cure is not the best route because the chance for cure is very low, and the price (discomfort, travel, expense, risk of death or complications) is too great. You may decide that your best choice at this time is taking a treatment that controls your cancer without curing it.

Doctors can provide some statistical data for each treatment option regarding your chances of remission, cure, complications, side effects and death. Doctors and nurses can give you some concept of what the experience of treatment will be like. Patients who have been through similar treatments can give you closer insight into the experience. Doctors or nurses usually can refer you to patients willing to share their experiences and advice.

You may feel unsure about your treatment choice despite having given it your best effort. Take comfort in the knowledge that you and your physicians are making the wisest decision you can at this time. Once the final decision has been made and you have started treatment, do not look back. Devote your energy toward your treatment.

- > **What are** the treatment options available to me, both conventional and investigational?
- > **What is** the remission rate of each option? How long do remissions usually last?
- > **What is** the response rate of each option (partial and complete)?
- > **What is** the cure rate of each option?
- > **What is** my risk of dying?
- > **What are** the potential side effects and complications?
- > **What are** the long-term risks of each option?
- > **What is** my risk of developing a second cancer?
- > **What is** my risk of developing a serious medical problem, such as heart, lung or kidney disease?

- > **What is** my risk of developing a less serious medical problem that would be significant to me (e.g., numbness in the fingertips that would make it difficult for a violinist to perform)?
- > **What future options** are compromised or eliminated by each treatment option? (After certain treatments, other treatments can have a lower success rate, carry greater risk or are no longer options.)
- > **Who can** provide the treatment?
- > **Where can** I receive treatment?
- > **How long** is each treatment course?
- > **How debilitated** will I be from treatment?
- > **Will I** be able to work?
- > **Will I** be able to pursue my special interests?
- > **How much** will it cost?