

Health Facts

After Your Diagnosis: What Comes Next?

When you go to the doctor, he or she generally will make a diagnosis about your particular problem. If you or a family member receives a diagnosis of cancer or another serious health issue, it usually is a shock. This may make you feel anxious, scared, upset, or angry. If that happens, it's a good idea to keep these points in mind:



- ❑ **Understand the Process.** In the first several weeks after diagnosis, you will probably be called on to make decisions about your treatment. Make sure that you understand the timeframe for this initial treatment and any treatments that may follow.
- ❑ **Get Informed About Your Condition.** Take advantage of the many available sources of information to get informed about your condition. Visit your local public library or a bookstore, or look online at high quality health sites like <http://medlineplus.gov> or www.mayoclinic.com. Also, be aware that there are many disease-specific websites that provide helpful resources and support to patients. Among many examples are the American Cancer Society (see their website at www.cancer.org) and the American Heart Association (see their website at www.americanheart.org).
- ❑ **Ask Questions.** As you consider treatment options with your doctor, ask plenty of questions to help you become fully aware of the risks and benefits associated with different treatment options. See the text box at right for examples of the kinds of questions you should ask your doctor and other health care providers.
- ❑ **Get Support.** Dealing with disease can be hard. It's OK to ask for support from family and friends. Also, many employers offer Employee Assistance Programs ("EAPs") designed to help employees dealing with tough situations, so it may be worth taking advantage of these.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor

- What is my condition?
- What treatment do you recommend?
- Are there other alternatives?
- What are the risks and benefits associated with these treatment options?
- How long will this treatment last?
- How will this treatment make me feel?
- What medications are you prescribing for me, and what do they do?
- What side effects should I expect from this treatment?