

## Surgery

# Cancer Treatments: Surgery

**Having an operation, or surgery, was the first treatment used for many types of cancer. It is still the most common way to treat many cancers.**

Some people only have surgery. Other people have surgery and systemic therapy and/ or radiation therapy.

## **Why is surgery best for me?**

We know that for certain types of cancer, surgery is the best treatment. The type of surgery depends on the type of cancer you have and where it is.

- Find out what type of cancer you have.
- See if the cancer has spread. Your doctor may do a biopsy (a short procedure) to remove some cells so they can be looked at and studied.
- Remove cancer that has not spread.
- Remove as much of the cancer as possible, if your cancer is very severe.
- Help you get rid of or cope with cancer symptoms, such as pain.

## **Where do I go for surgery?**

Most people have surgery in a hospital. How long you stay in the hospital depends on the type of surgery you have and how much care you need afterwards.

## **What are the side effects of surgery?**

The side effects of surgery depend on the type of cancer and type of surgery. Some people have no side effects; other people have some or many side effects. No one can know for sure exactly which side effects you might have until after your surgery. Your health care team will give you more details about the side effects that you might have and how to cope with them.

**What are your questions? Please ask.**

**We are here to help you.**

Please keep in mind that side effects are not a sign of how well the treatment worked against your cancer.

### **How can I cope with my cancer and surgery?**

It is normal for you and your family to have many feelings at this time. Talk with your doctor, nurse, or someone else on your health care team about your feelings.

Your doctor and nurse are there to answer your questions and to help you.

### **Questions to ask your health care team**

- Why is surgery the best treatment for my cancer?
- What are the benefits and risks of surgery for me?
- What type of surgery will I need?
- When will I have surgery?
- How long will the surgery last?
- Will I have any side effects from the surgery?
- Will my body change (or look different) as a result of the surgery?
- How long do I have to stay in the hospital?
- How long will it take me to get better?
- How will you know if you removed all of the cancer?
- What happens after the surgery?
- When will I see my cancer doctor after the surgery?

## **Looking for more information on this topic?**

You can contact the Canadian Cancer Society at [www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca) or call the Cancer Information Service of the Cancer Society at 1-888-939-3333. You can also contact your local public library for books, videos, magazine articles and online health information. For a list of public libraries in Nova Scotia go to

**<http://publiclibraries.ns.ca>.**

For additional information you may contact your Cancer Patient Navigator toll free at 1-866-524-1234. Also visit the Nova Scotia Cancer Care Program website **[www.nscancercare.ca](http://www.nscancercare.ca)**.

**Patient and family feedback is very important to us.**

**We would like to invite you to send any comments or suggestions on how to improve this booklet to [education.cancercare@nshealth.ca](mailto:education.cancercare@nshealth.ca) or feel free to call us at 1-866-599-2267.**

*Prepared by: Nova Scotia Health Cancer Care Program  
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*This pamphlet is for educational purposes only.*

*It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider.*

*If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.*