

A Guide to Clinical Trials for *Cancer Patients*

What are clinical trials?

A clinical trial is a study that helps doctors and researchers find better ways to prevent, treat or diagnose diseases such as cancer. There are several types of cancer clinical trials — some test new ways to treat cancer, others test new methods of prevention, detection or diagnosis. Some clinical trials help evaluate and improve the quality of life for cancer patients.



Trials are conducted in cancer centers, hospitals, clinics, and doctors' offices. Clinical trials answer important scientific questions that can improve care. All of today's successful treatments for

cancer are based on results of clinical trials done in the past. Because of progress made through clinical trials, people treated for cancer are living longer.

Doctors believe it is important to have people of all races, genders, ages and backgrounds take part in clinical trials so that what is learned will help everyone.

What are some of the good things (benefits) about being part of clinical trials?

Patients who join clinical trials will get the standard medicine for their cancer. They may also get a new type of medicine that is only available to patients who join the trial.

If you agree to take part in a trial, there may or may not be direct medical benefit to you. Patients who take part in trials are watched very closely by their doctors to keep an eye on their health. Doctors want to learn as much as possible about the treatment and how patients respond to it. This may mean extra tests and doctor visits.

Doctors hope the information learned from trials will help future patients.

There are Several Types of Clinical Trials:

Prevention Trials try to find out if there are ways to stop cancer from starting. These trials look for ways to reduce the chance of getting cancer. Most people who take part in these trials are healthy, but may have an increased risk of developing cancer, or have an increased risk of developing a second cancer.

Screening Trials look for ways to detect cancer before a person shows signs of having cancer.

Diagnostic Trials are for people who have signs of cancer. This trial looks to identify cancer at an earlier stage.

Treatment Trials compare standard treatments to new treatments (new medicines, combinations of approved medicines, radiation treatments or other procedures). Standard treatment is the current way patients are most often cared for.

Quality of Life Trials look for ways to improve the comfort of cancer patients and survivors. These trials study ways to help people who experience the effects of cancer or its treatments. Quality of life trials may also be incorporated into prevention trials.

Genetics Trials are sometimes part of another cancer trial. This section of the trial may look at how family genes affect detection, diagnosis or response to cancer treatment.

What are some of the drawbacks (risks) to being part of clinical trials?

The reason for the clinical trial is to see if the new treatment works as good as or better than the current standard of treatment. It is not guaranteed that treatment given in a clinical trial will help a patient more than standard treatment.

While on the clinical trial, you may have some side effects. There are usually side effects for any cancer treatment, including the treatment you will get while in a clinical trial. Many side effects go away shortly after the treatment is stopped, but in some cases side effects can be serious. You should discuss any side effects you experience with your doctor.



What kind of information will I get about the trial?

Before you join a clinical trial, a healthcare provider (doctor or nurse) will explain what the trial is for and what will happen. You can ask any questions you have about the trial. In fact, we want you to ask a lot of questions.



You will also be given a consent form to sign. The consent form will give you:

- Detailed information about the clinical trial
- What to expect during the trial
- The expected end date of the trial
- The possible side effects from the treatment
- Other information about how the trial may affect your daily life.

If you decide to join a clinical trial, you will be asked to sign a consent form. Even if you sign the consent form, you can still change your mind at any time. If you do join a trial, you can stop at any time. You have that right.

Who looks out for the patient?

Clinical trials are reviewed at a national level and again locally. Each hospital or cancer center has an Institutional Review Board (IRB). It is the job of the IRB to review clinical trials and make sure they are run in a safe and fair manner. An IRB has many different members, including doctors, nurses, patient advocates, patients and people from your community.

As a patient, do I have to be part of a clinical trial?

No, taking part in a clinical trial is your choice. It is a good idea to look at all of your treatment options with the help of your family and your doctor. This will help you decide if receiving your treatment on a clinical trial is the best way to treat or prevent your cancer and help you.

Before you decide to join a clinical trial, it is important to ask questions. You and your family should feel free to ask as many questions as you like before you decide to join a clinical trial.

We encourage you to take this brochure with you when you go to visit your doctor. The following are just a few questions to ask yourself and your doctor:

- What is the purpose of the clinical trial?
- What tests and treatments are done as part of the clinical trial?
- How could the clinical trial affect (change) my daily life?
- What are other treatment options?
- What are the possible short- and long-term side effects of the treatment for my family and myself?
- Why is it important for women and people of all races to enroll in clinical trials?
- How long will the clinical trial last?
- Are clinical trials covered by my insurance?
- Will I have to stay in the hospital during the clinical trial? If so, how often and for how long?
- Will I have extra costs because of the clinical trial?
- How long do I have to decide before joining this trial?
- If I consent to provide blood samples, how will these samples be used?

To find out more about clinical trials in your area, search TrialCheck®, an easy-to-use Internet-based cancer clinical trials search engine at www.CancerTrialsHelp.org, ask your doctor, or call 1-800-4-CANCER.

The Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group (ECOG) is one of the largest clinical cancer research organizations in the United States. It conducts clinical trials in all types of adult cancers. ECOG was established in 1955 as one of the first cooperative groups launched to perform multi-center cancer clinical trials.

For more information about the Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group (ECOG), visit www.ecog.org.

