

# Common Cancer Terms



## **Adjuvant Therapy**

Adjuvant therapy refers to treatment given after the primary treatment, such as surgery or radiation therapy. It is aimed at eliminating any remaining cancer cells and reducing the risk of cancer recurrence.

## **Biomarker**

A biomarker is a measurable substance or characteristic that indicates the presence of a disease, such as cancer. Biomarkers can be used for early detection, diagnosis, monitoring treatment response, and predicting prognosis.

## **Biopsy**

A biopsy involves the removal and examination of a small sample of tissue or cells to determine if cancer is present. Various biopsy techniques, such as needle biopsy or surgical biopsy, are used to collect samples from suspicious areas. The analysis of these samples helps in confirming a cancer diagnosis and determining its specific characteristics.

## **Carcinoma**

Carcinoma refers to a type of cancer that originates in epithelial cells, which are the cells that line the internal and external surfaces of the body. The majority of cancers, including breast, lung, and colon cancers, are classified as carcinomas.

## **Clinical Trial**

A clinical trial is a research study conducted with human participants to evaluate the safety, effectiveness, and potential side effects of new treatments, drugs, or interventions. Clinical trials play a vital role in advancing cancer research and improving treatment options.

## **Genetic Testing**

Genetic testing involves analysing an individual's DNA to identify specific gene mutations or alterations that may increase the risk of developing certain types of cancer. Genetic testing can help guide personalised treatment decisions and assess cancer risk in family members.

## **Gleason Score**

The Gleason score is a grading system used to assess the aggressiveness of prostate cancer. It is determined by examining tissue samples from a prostate biopsy under a

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microscope. The score combines primary and secondary Gleason grades, typically ranging from 6 to 10. Higher scores indicate more aggressive cancer. The Gleason score helps guide treatment decisions and predict prognosis. It is one factor considered alongside other clinical factors in developing a personalised treatment plan for prostate cancer patients. Regular monitoring, and consultation with healthcare providers, is crucial for effective management.

## **Lymph Nodes**

Lymph nodes are small, bean-shaped structures located throughout the body's lymphatic system. They act as filters, trapping and destroying harmful substances, including cancer cells. Lymph nodes near a primary tumour are often examined to determine if cancer has spread beyond its original site. Lymph node involvement may affect the staging and treatment plan.

## **Metastasis**

Metastasis refers to the spread of cancer from its original site to other parts of the body. Cancer cells can break away from the primary tumour and travel through the bloodstream or lymphatic system, forming new tumours in distant organs or tissues. The presence of metastases indicates an advanced stage of cancer and may impact treatment decisions.

## **Mutation**

A mutation is a change in the DNA sequence of a gene, which can alter the normal functioning of cells. Mutations can be inherited or acquired during a person's lifetime and are associated with an increased risk of developing certain types of cancer.

## **Neoadjuvant Therapy**

Neoadjuvant therapy refers to treatment given before the main treatment, such as surgery or radiation therapy. It aims to shrink tumours, make them more operable, or increase the effectiveness of subsequent treatments.

## **Palliative Care**

Palliative care focuses on providing relief from symptoms and improving the quality of life for individuals with cancer. It addresses physical, emotional, and spiritual needs and can be provided alongside curative treatments. Palliative care aims to manage pain, alleviate side effects, and support overall wellbeing. While it is more common, it is not only limited to end-of-life care and can be initiated at any stage of the cancer journey.

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## **Pet Scan**

A PET scan, or Positron Emission Tomography, is a powerful imaging technique used in medicine to detect and visualise cellular activity within the body. It involves the injection of a small amount of radioactive material, usually a form of glucose, into the patient's bloodstream. As cells consume this radioactive glucose, a special camera captures the emitted positron signals, creating detailed three-dimensional images of metabolic activity. PET scans are particularly valuable in cancer diagnosis and staging, as cancer cells often exhibit higher metabolic rates than surrounding tissues. This technology aids medical professionals in identifying abnormalities, pinpointing the extent of diseases, and evaluating the effectiveness of treatments.

## **Prognosis**

Prognosis is the predicted outcome or course of a disease, including the expected response to treatment and the chances of long-term survival. Prognosis is influenced by various factors, such as the type and stage of cancer, overall health, and individual response to treatment.

## **Prognostic Factors**

Prognostic factors are specific characteristics or factors that influence the prognosis of a cancer patient. These factors can include tumour size, grade, stage, presence of metastasis, genetic mutations, and overall health status. Prognostic factors help healthcare providers estimate the likely course of the disease and guide treatment decisions.

## **Prophylactic Surgery**

Prophylactic surgery involves the surgical removal of noncancerous tissues or organs that have a high risk of developing cancer. This preventive measure aims to reduce the chances of developing cancer in individuals with a strong genetic predisposition or other significant risk factors.

## **Remission**

Remission refers to the absence of signs and symptoms of cancer. It indicates that cancer is no longer detectable using current medical tests. Remission can be partial (some signs of cancer remain) or complete (no evidence of cancer).

## **Sarcoma**

Sarcoma is a type of cancer that develops in the connective tissues, such as bones, muscles, cartilage, or blood vessels. Sarcomas are relatively rare compared to carcinomas and may require specialized treatment approaches.

## **Support Groups**

Support groups are gatherings of individuals facing similar challenges, such as cancer patients, survivors, or caregivers. They provide a supportive environment to share experiences, exchange information, and offer emotional support. Support groups can be beneficial in coping with the physical and emotional challenges of cancer diagnosis and treatment. You might find support groups by asking your GP or searching for local groups on Facebook.

## **Staging**

Staging is the process of determining the extent and spread of cancer within the body. It involves evaluating the size of the tumour, lymph node involvement, and whether cancer has metastasised. Staging provides crucial information for treatment planning and prognosis. Common staging systems include the TNM system, which assesses tumour size, lymph node involvement, and metastasis, and assigns a stage ranging from one to four. Four being more aggressive and one being early-stage development.

## **Tumour**

A tumour is an abnormal growth of cells that can be either benign (non-cancerous) or malignant (cancerous). Benign tumours do not invade nearby tissues or spread to other parts of the body, while malignant tumours have the potential to invade surrounding tissues and metastasize.