

# Don't Be Afraid of Clinical Trials!

## They Could Improve the Quality of Your Care

Cancer is a complicated disease, so doctors are continually trying to learn more about how it works and how better to treat it. Progress in treatment is a result of researching new procedures and drugs through clinical trials in an effort to develop more effective treatments.

### What is a Clinical Trial?

A clinical trial is a research study that evaluates a new treatment. But remember that, in most cases, the new treatment being tested has already shown promise of being an improvement over the current one. It is not an unregulated experiment. Many clinical trials are tests to see how much better a new treatment works than the current therapy. People in clinical trials are among the first to receive new treatments, and they are closely monitored by doctors and other researchers.

### Medical Considerations

The first thing you need to know is whether there is a clinical trial available for someone with your type and stage of cancer. The best place to find information about clinical trials that might be right for you is your oncologist. You can also contact the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service at **1-800-4-CANCER** or visit [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov).

When you find a clinical trial for your specific type of cancer, it is important that you understand exactly what treatment is being offered and how it differs from the standard treatment available for your cancer. You may do this by obtaining a copy of the informed consent statement for that clinical trial, which includes a complete description of the trial.

The law requires that you are given a copy of this statement before you enroll in a trial. It will be provided to you by the clinic or hospital running the study. You should also get information about new or possibly unique side effects of the treatment that is being studied.

### Practical Issues

When considering a clinical trial, discussing practical questions and concerns ahead of time can help you and your family feel more prepared. For example, many medical insurance companies do not include coverage for treatments, physicians or expenses related to clinical trials. While the clinic or hospital conducting the trial will cover the cost of any new drugs under study, you might need to advocate for reimbursement from your insurer for coverage for the other costs associated with the trial. Also, your participation in the trial may involve traveling to another medical facility, city, or state. It may require changing your doctor or working with a large health care team. Find out ahead of time what's involved and how the study may affect your daily life so you can make the best decision for you.



## Emotional Considerations

Participating in a clinical trial may have an emotional effect on you, your family and loved ones. Any new treatment may raise questions and concerns, especially if it's a treatment that is still being studied.

Remember that clinical trial participants often receive a better quality of care and have access to the most advanced treatments. Carefully read the informed consent document and then talk to someone on the clinical trial staff if you have any concerns about safety. By law, all clinical trials have safeguards to protect the medical and psychological health of the participants. Participants always have the right to drop out of any clinical trial at any time.



## CancerCare Can Help

Clinical trials offer many advantages to people undergoing cancer treatment. You should try to get as much help and information as possible when making a decision, but ultimately, the decision is yours. CancerCare's professional oncology social workers can help you sort through some of the practical and emotional concerns that you may have about joining a clinical trial. Call us at **1-800-813 HOPE (4673)** or visit [www.cancercares.org](http://www.cancercares.org) to learn more.



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