

# Choosing Treatments

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## Quick Check for Quality

### Learning About the Problem

The first step in getting the right treatment is to tell your doctor what's going on. This information might include:

Your symptoms:

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When they first started:

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When they occur:

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Are they getting better? Worse?

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What makes them better? Worse?

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Are they affecting eating, sleeping, or other activities? How?

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Medicines you take:

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### Medical Tests

Doctors order blood tests, x-rays, and other tests to help diagnose medical problems. Perhaps you do not know why you need a particular test or you don't understand how it will help you. Here are some questions to ask:

How is the test done?

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What kind of information will the test provide?

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Is this test the only way to find out that information?

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What are the benefits and risks of having this test?

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How accurate is the test?

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What do I need to do to prepare for the test? (What you do or don't do may affect the accuracy of the test results.)

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Will the test be uncomfortable?

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How long will it take to get the results, and how will I get them?

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What's the next step after the test?

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### **Getting the Diagnosis**

Ask your doctor to explain what you have and how it might affect you and your family.

What is the diagnosis?

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What is my prognosis (outlook for the future)?

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What changes, if any, will I need to make in my daily life?

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Is there a chance that someone else in my family might get the same condition?

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Will I need special help at home for my condition? If so, what type of help?

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## Looking at the Options

All treatments have benefits and risks. To learn more about them you may want to ask your doctor:

What is the recommended treatment? Are there other choices?

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What are the chances the treatment will work?

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What are the expected results? When will I see them?

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What are the risks?

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What are the benefits?

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Are there any side effects? (Most treatments have them.) What can be done about them?

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Is the treatment painful? How can the pain be controlled?

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What happens if I choose to have no treatment at all?

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How much does the treatment cost? Will my health plan pay?

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Once you have the answers to these questions, you might want to make a chart of "Benefits and Risks" or "Pros and Cons" to help you decide if the treatment is right for you. Here is a sample chart:

<b>Benefits (Pros)</b>	<b>Risks (Cons)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Treatment has worked well for others with my condition.</li><li>• The medicine only needs to be taken</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some minor side effects (rash, stomach upset) could be troubling.</li><li>• The medicine is costly.</li></ul>

- once a day.
- No major side effects are expected.

### **Making Decisions About Surgery**

Do I really need this surgery? Is there some other way to treat my condition?

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What will happen if I wait until later to have surgery? Or never have it at all?

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How often does this type of surgery help my kind of problem? How much does it help?

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Where will the surgery be performed?

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Does the surgeon, hospital, or surgery center have a lot of experience with this kind of procedure?

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Is the surgeon experienced and qualified to perform the surgery?

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What complications or side effects might I have?

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What kind of pain might I have? How will it be treated?

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How long will it take me to recover? Will I need help at home? What kind of help?

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How much does the surgery cost?

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Will my health plan pay?

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