

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 **chemotherapy** 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 operation 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.

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 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>.

Cancer Care Nova Scotia has made an electronic patient education program, the Oncology Interactive Education Series (OIES), available in most health districts in Nova Scotia. Please check with your health care team, your Cancer Patient Navigator, or your health care library to see if this program is available in your district and to learn how to use the program.

For more information visit *Cancer Care Nova Scotia's* website www.cancercare.ns.ca



Capital Health

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