

Research is essential to advances in cancer care, from prevention and screening through diagnosis and treatment. Over the years there have been many improvements in cancer care as a result of research. Clinical trials are one reason we have safe and effective cancer care today. Clinical trials provide us with hope for even better therapies in the future.

The Capital Health Cancer Care Program in Halifax and the Cape Breton Cancer Centre in Sydney are involved with many local, national and international clinical trials. Ask your doctor or nurse about clinical trials that might be available to you.

## What is a clinical trial?

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Clinical trials test new therapies or a group of existing therapies in people with cancer. Many of today's therapies are the result of what we learned from clinical trials done in the past.

During a clinical trial, more information is gathered about:

- How treatments affect patients
- Possible side effects
- The safety of the new therapy
- How well the treatment works against the cancer
- Whether or not the new treatment is better than the standard treatment for that type of cancer

Participating in a clinical trial is voluntary. You always have the choice to say no to any research or to stop taking part in a clinical trial at any time without it affecting your care.

## How are clinical trials developed?

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Long before a clinical trial begins, the search for better cancer therapies start with research in the laboratory. Clinical trials build on the results in the laboratory so that new drugs and therapies can be developed. New cancer treatments must be shown to be safe and effective before they can be offered to patients.

## How can I take part in a clinical trial?

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Clinical trials are not always available for all types of cancer. Your oncologist should be aware of the clinical trials available for you and he/she will discuss these with you. Ask your oncologist or nurse if you are able to take part in a clinical trial.

If you are eligible for a clinical trial and if you want to learn more about it, you will meet with a clinical trial nurse. You will be given more information about the specific clinical trial and you will be encouraged to ask questions. You will have time to think about your

options and discuss them with your family, friends and other doctors. A clinical trial nurse will contact you regarding your decision. If you decide to participate in a clinical trial you will be asked to sign a consent form which outlines all of the details of that specific trial.

## What are the benefits of a clinical trial?

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- All patients will receive the best possible care according to the current cancer care guidelines.
- By considering all the cancer care choices available to you, including clinical trials, you are taking an active role in your care.
- By participating in a clinical trial you are contributing to cancer research.

## Will I find out the results of the clinical trial?

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If there is a direct impact on your care during the course of the trial, you will be made aware as soon as possible. Most often, when a clinical trial has finished accepting patients, a period of time is needed to study the results. Sometimes, the trial continues to follow patients long after the treatment is completed. When a clinical trial is complete, and the patients have been followed long enough, the results may be written in the medical literature. This may take many years. Ask your doctor about the progress of your clinical trial.

## Questions to ask?

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- Is there a clinical trial for my cancer?
- What standard of care would I get if I do not take part in a clinical trial?
- How much time is required to participate in a trial?
- Will I need additional tests?
- Can I receive my therapy in my home hospital?
- Can I choose which therapy I receive?
- What happens if I go on the study and I get side effects or don't want to continue?
- Are there any risks associated with participation in a clinical trial?
- Are there any extra costs to me?

## You can play a vital role in Cancer Research!

For more information about Clinical Trials visit the *Cancer Care Nova Scotia* website [www.cancercare.ns.ca](http://www.cancercare.ns.ca)

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