

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** or **radiation therapy**.

## Why is surgery best for me?

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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.

You might need surgery to:

- 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?

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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?

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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?

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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.



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## Questions to ask your health care team

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- 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 operation 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?

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This fact sheet is meant to support the information that your health care team gives you. It is also meant to encourage you to ask questions to your health care team. This fact sheet does **not** replace any information that your healthcare team gives you.

Living Well With Cancer is a partnership among several people living with cancer, health care professionals, people who represent cancer and professional organizations, and Ortho Biotech. The LWWC partnership gratefully acknowledges the input of the QEII Health Sciences Centre in this fact sheet.

Living Well With Cancer Information Centre

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