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When Treatment Should Start

Waiting to have a test done and waiting for your cancer treatment to start are stressful times that can bring up strong emotions. If you're experiencing anxiety, sadness, or other kinds of stressful emotions, it may help you to talk with others about it. You might also have what's called "scanxiety" or anxiety caused by tests and test results. This often leads to questions about the scheduling of your tests and timing of your treatment, such as why the test takes so long to schedule, when results will be known, when treatment will start, if it can or will be delayed, or why it might be OK to wait to start. You might wonder "how long is too long to wait?"

- [Does cancer treatment always need to be started right away?](#)
[What if I have to wait to get a test scheduled or to get an appointment with a cancer](#)

Some people can wait a few weeks or a few months to start treatment because their type of cancer does not tend to grow as fast as others. When treatment doesn't need to start immediately, it might be delayed if:

- You are waiting to get lab results back that will help decide what treatment option is best.
- You have already had surgery to remove a tumor, and you need time to recover before starting more treatment.
- You need to make adjustments at home, work, or for child care before starting treatment.
- There are other personal factors and health problems that must be worked around.
- You want more time to get a second opinion.

It's important to know each person's case is different. There are many factors that can affect when treatment should, or does, start. Questions about when your treatment should start need to be answered by your cancer care team, because they know your situation best.

What if I have to wait to get a test scheduled or to get an appointment with a cancer doctor (oncologist)?

Some people may have to wait longer than others to get tests scheduled and done. How long you'll be asked to wait depends on the type of test and where the test is being done. Sometimes there are a limited number of machines that are needed to perform a test. Other times there may be equipment or staffing problems at the facility where the test is done. It's best to talk about any concerns you have about the timing of your testing with your doctor or nurse.

Some people also might have trouble getting in to see a cancer doctor as soon as they would like. This might be because there aren't a lot of cancer doctors in their area, their insurance providers have certain limits, or they don't have health insurance.

If you are having trouble getting in to see a cancer doctor in your area, start by talking to your primary care provider or the person who diagnosed your cancer. They can help you figure out if it's okay to wait for an appointment or if you need to look at other options. For people who need to look at other options, check out the tools on [Where to Find Cancer Care²](#).

If you are having trouble finding a cancer doctor who is in-network, contact your

insurance provider. They might be able to help you find other cancer doctors who could see you sooner.

If you don't have health insurance, try getting in touch with hospitals in your area. They might offer free or low-cost care or know about resources that could help you. They might also have social workers or other staff who could help you. You may also want to look at [health insurance options](#)³ you might qualify for and [resources to help with cancer-related expenses](#)⁴.

If you need to travel to see a cancer doctor, there may be [lodging programs](#)⁵ that provide free or lower-cost options.

Hyperlinks

1. www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/making-treatment-decisions/planning-scheduling-treatment.html
 2. www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/finding-care/where-to-find-cancer-care.html
- 30 www.cancer.org/cancer/financial-insurance-matters/understanding-health-insurance.html
www.cancer.org/cancer/financial-insurance-matters/managing-health-insurance/programs-and-resources-to-help⁴
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