



## How to Choose a Hospital: Worksheet

If you've been told you have cancer, you will want to make sure you get the best possible medical care and treatment. Choosing a hospital will be one of your most important decisions. Here are some questions to ask as you look for a hospital that meets your needs. If you have already chosen a doctor, it's important that he or she be able to use, or have *admitting privileges* at the hospital you prefer. It's also very important that your health insurance be accepted there.

If you'd like to learn more, please see our document called *Choosing a Doctor and Hospital*. You can call us at 1-800-227-2345 for a free copy, or read it online at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

**Hospital name:**

**Address/location:**

Questions to ask

**Does The Joint Commission accredit the hospital?**

The Joint Commission is an independent non-profit organization that evaluates and accredits many health care organizations in the United States, including hospitals. The Joint Commission's Quality Check gives you information about the quality and safety of accredited organizations. You can get these reports online at [www.jointcommission.org](http://www.jointcommission.org).

## Does the hospital offer all the services you might need at some point during cancer treatment?

Although you may not need all of these services during your treatment, you can use this list to check off the services the hospital offers

Pathology lab

Diagnostic lab

Blood bank

Tumor board

A tumor board is made up of experts from different cancer care disciplines. It meets to review individual cases and discuss ways to give the best available care. Patients are not charged for this consultation process.

Social services department

Respiratory therapy department

Rehabilitation services

Intensive care unit

Emergency room

Outpatient infusion center

## Find out if the hospital is part of one of these cancer quality programs:

Does the **Commission on Cancer (CoC) program** of the **American College of Surgeons** approve the hospital as one that's committed to provide the best available cancer diagnosis and treatment programs?

If the hospital is approved by the CoC, you know it meets certain standards and offers a range of cancer care services. Its ability to deliver quality cancer care is constantly being surveyed by the CoC. If you would like to find a CoC-approved center near you, use the "CoC Hospital Locator" on their website at [www.facs.org/cancer](http://www.facs.org/cancer) or call 1-800-621-4111.

Is the hospital approved as a **National Cancer Institute Cancer Center** (either as a cancer center or a comprehensive cancer center)?

The National Cancer Institute Cancer Centers program supports research-oriented institutions across the US that are known for their scientific excellence. You can learn more about NCI Cancer Centers on our website or call us at 1-800-227-2345.

Is the hospital a member of the **Association of Community Cancer Centers (ACCC)**?

The ACCC website contains profiles of the cancer programs for over 700 member institutions. These profiles contain basic information about ACCC cancer programs, such as contact info, treatments offered, and special cancer services. You can find the ACCC “Find a Cancer Program” tool online at [www.accc-cancer.org](http://www.accc-cancer.org).

If the patient is a child or teen, is the hospital a member of the **Children’s Oncology Group**?

The Children’s Oncology Group’s (COG) mission is to cure and prevent childhood and adolescent cancer through research and comprehensive care. Research shows that kids treated at pediatric cancer centers have better outcomes. COG has nearly 250 affiliated centers that are linked to a university or children’s hospital. To find a list of COG institutions, go to their website at [www.curesearch.org](http://www.curesearch.org).

**Is the staff friendly, helpful, and willing to answer my questions in a courteous, customer-friendly way?**

**Is there a cancer care section or unit where the nurses are specially trained to care for people with cancer?**

**What's the nurse-to-patient ratio on any given shift? (One nurse usually can care for 3 to 6 patients anywhere except in the ICU, where it's usually 1 nurse to every 2 patients.)**

**Will I see the same staff members on each visit or admission?**

**Is the facility clean and well-maintained?**

You might need to tour the hospital to find out about this.

**How comfortable and private are the patient rooms?**

**Where can you use your cell phone?**

**What's the hospital's visiting policy?**

**Is this a teaching hospital? If so, will I see a lot of medical students and how often will I see my doctor?**

## **What's the hospital's reputation?**

Ask your friends and relatives, especially any nurses or doctors who work in your community.

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For additional assistance please contact your American Cancer Society  
1-800-227-2345 or [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)