

# Clinical Trials for Cancer

Cancer clinical trials are research studies that are done to find better ways to treat cancer.



## Why clinical trials are needed for cancer treatments

Cancer clinical trials are studies done in people. Clinical trials help scientists and doctors know if a new treatment is safe and how well it works. Many cancer clinical trials test a new treatment by comparing it to a standard treatment. A standard treatment is one of the best options currently being used to treat a type of cancer. Many people are helped each year because they choose to take part in clinical trials as part of their cancer treatment. And, even years later, many other people can benefit from what's learned in clinical trials.



## How clinical trials work

Clinical trials are done in stages called phases. The findings from each phase must be approved before moving to the next phase. In phase 1, the new treatment is tested to see if it's safe and find out what dose works best without causing severe side effects. In phase 2, the new treatment is tested to see how it works against certain types of cancer. In phase 3, the new treatment is compared to the current standard treatment to see which might treat certain cancers better and how side effects for each might be different. If the new treatment passes all phases, it can be approved for use in people who may need it. But, the new treatment will still be studied after approval to keep an eye on how it's working.



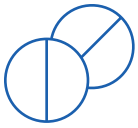
## What it's like to be in a clinical trial

If you are in a clinical trial, you may have more clinic visits and lab tests than you would with standard treatment. You will have a team of experts taking care of you and watching you closely to see how you're doing.

There are some risks to being in a clinical trial. In many clinical trials, it's not known if the treatment will work or what side effects you might have. That's often what the study is trying to find out. Like standard treatment, most side effects go away over time, but some may last a long time or even be life-threatening. You'll be told about any known risks before treatment starts.

But there can be benefits to being in a clinical trial. You'll either get the standard treatment for your type of cancer, or you'll get a newer treatment that might turn out to be even better. In some cases, the only way you might be able to get a newer treatment is to be part of a clinical trial.

Some people worry that taking part in a clinical trial means they are part of an experiment. People in clinical trials may need to do certain things or have certain tests to stay in the study, but they get very good care. In fact, most people in clinical trials like the extra attention they get from their cancer care and research teams.



## Placebo use in clinical trials

Placebos (fake treatments) are rarely used alone in clinical trials that test a new treatment. A placebo might be used if there is no treatment known to work or the study is looking at some way to prevent cancer. But, most cancer clinical trials do not use placebos. It's not ethical to give someone a placebo instead of a treatment that's known to work.



## Deciding whether to be in a clinical trial

Before you can be part of a clinical trial, the research doctor or nurse will explain to you what to expect and discuss the risks and benefits of being in the clinical trial. They will also answer any questions and talk about concerns you might have. If you agree to be in the clinical trial, they will give you a written consent form to sign.

It is important to know that it's your choice whether or not to be in, or stay in, a clinical trial. You can choose to leave the study at any time for any reason, and still get the care you would be getting if you hadn't chosen to be in a clinical trial.



## Questions to ask

There are many things you may want to know before you agree to be in a clinical trial. You might want to ask the research doctor or nurse:

- Why is this study being done?
- How long would I be in the clinical trial?
- How often would I need to be seen?
- Where would I have to go for treatment and tests?
- Who would I call if I have problems?
- Will I have to pay for anything?
- What are my other options?

Other questions you might want to ask will depend on the type of treatment you're being offered. You might want to talk to trusted family members and friends as you decide. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Learn as much as you can about any clinical trial that you are interested in so you can make the choice that's best for you.

For cancer information, day-to-day help, and support, call the American Cancer Society at **1-800-227-2345** or visit us online at **[cancer.org/clinicaltrials](https://cancer.org/clinicaltrials)**. We're here when you need us.

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