

CANCER EXPLAINED PRESENTS

A PLAIN-LANGUAGE GUIDE

TREATMENT WORDS, EXPLAINED

Plain-language meanings for common treatment terms

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Treatment Words, Explained

Plain-language meanings for common treatment terms

1 People you may meet

- [ ] Oncologist — a doctor who treats cancer. Medical, surgical, and radiation oncologists focus on different kinds of treatment.
- [ ] Pathologist — a doctor who examines tissue and blood samples under a microscope.
- [ ] Oncology nurse — a nurse specially trained in cancer care; often your main day-to-day contact.
- [ ] Social worker / navigator — helps with practical matters like transport, costs, and support services.

2 Words about the plan

- [ ] Protocol or regimen — the written plan for a treatment: which medicines, what doses, on which days.
- [ ] Cycle — a round of treatment followed by a rest period; treatment is often given in repeating cycles.
- [ ] First-line treatment — the treatment usually tried first for a condition.
- [ ] Adjuvant / neoadjuvant — extra treatment given after (adjuvant) or before (neoadjuvant) the main treatment.

3 Words about results

- [ ] Response — how a cancer changes after treatment; a "complete response" means no cancer can be detected on tests.
- [ ] Remission — signs and symptoms are reduced (partial) or gone (complete); not always the same as cured.
- [ ] Stable disease — the cancer is not growing or shrinking on scans.
- [ ] Recurrence — cancer that has come back after a period when it could not be detected.

THE BOTTOM LINE

If a word is unclear at an appointment, ask — "Can you say that in plain language?" is always a fair question.

Sources: NCI: Dictionary of cancer terms (cancer.gov/publications/dictionaries/cancer-terms)

Learn more in plain language: cancerexplained.org/treatments/cancer-treatment-overview · **Updated:** 2026-07-05

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