Talking With Your Doctor

When you're diagnosed with cancer, you'll want to talk to an Oncologist, a doctor who specializes in cancer. The information below can help when you discuss your options.

Questions to Ask Your Oncologist:

- Would you write down a description of my cancer—what is it called, where is it located, what stage is it in, and other details that may be important in deciding treatment options?
- Has the cancer spread beyond where it started? What does that mean?
- How does this affect my treatment options and long-term outcome (prognosis)?
- What are my chances of survival, based on my cancer as you see it?
- How do I get a copy of my pathology report?

Questions about Treatment:

- What are all my treatment options? What do you recommend and why?
- How much experience do you have treating this type of cancer?
- What's the goal of my treatment?
- Will I need other tests before we can decide on treatment?
- If radiation is recommended, is proton therapy an option for me? What are the pros and cons?
- Is conventional therapy delivered with X-rays an option for me? What are the pros and cons?
- How long would my treatment last—at each appointment and overall?
- What is the treatment like?
- Will I need to alter my daily routine (e.g., going to work, exercising) because of the treatments?
- How do we know if the treatment worked?
- If my cancer were to come back some day, could I have treatments again?
- Where do I go to receive treatment?
- How much will this treatment cost? What does my insurance/Medicare/Medicaid pay?
- Once we have decided on a course of treatment for my diagnosis, what do I do next? Whom do I call? When should I start?
- Should I get a second opinion? How do I do that?
- Should I think about taking part in a clinical trial?

Knowing the side effects:

- What could I expect as side effects or complications during therapy with the different treatment options?
- What long-term side effects or complications could I have after therapy with the different treatment options?