

Talking to Your Veterinarian About Cancer: A Pet Parent's Guide

Receiving the news that your dog or cat has cancer can be devastating. You probably have a lot of worries, questions and concerns. Know that it's ok to ask for help and further information.

Your pet is a member of your family, and their health and comfort are important to you. To give them the best care and make the most appropriate treatment decision, you need to have all the facts. It's important for you to be able to talk candidly and openly with your pet's cancer care team.

Utilize this worksheet when preparing for a visit with your veterinarian or specialist. You may want to bring a notebook so you will have plenty of space to write everything down, and you can refer back whenever needed. Ask the right questions to get the answers you need to make the best decision for your pet.

Information to Share with Your Vet Prior to Your Visit

- **Bring Medical Records:** Bring your pet's medical records to your appointment or share them ahead of time, if possible so that your veterinarian can better assess your pet's diagnosis and treatment options.
- **Voice Concerns:** Share your concerns with your vet about the treatment options presented (i.e. "Will there be side effects associated with the treatment?" or "Will my pet experience a change in their ability to do daily activities (quality of life)?")
- **Share Your Values:** Share what is important to you and what is best for your family (i.e. "I want more time with my pet" or "I want him/her to play at the beach again.")
- **Discuss Financials:** Discuss the cost of treatment and share if you have pet insurance. Many insurance companies will cover the cost of treatment for cancer care. Payment options like CareCredit may also be available.

Questions to Ask Your Vet During Your Visit

- What kind of cancer does my pet have? _____
- Where is the cancer located? Has it spread? _____
- What is the cancer grade? What does that mean? _____
- What are my pet's treatment options?
 Surgery Chemotherapy Conventional Radiation
 Palliative Medications Immunotherapy Stereotactic Radiation (SRS/SRT)
 Humane Euthanasia Other Palliative Radiation
- What is a reasonable outcome for my pet (survival time) based on the recommended treatment? _____
- Can I get a copy of my pet's records and pathology report? _____
- Will my pet need additional testing or evaluation? _____
- What are the risks and benefits for each treatment? _____

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Questions to Ask Your Vet When You're Deciding How to Treat Your Pet's Cancer

Treatment Considerations

- What are the risks and side effects for this treatment? _____
- What are the chances the cancer will come back with this treatment? If that happens, what's the next step in treatment? _____
- Where is this treatment available? _____
- What are the signs that the cancer is progressing? _____
- Do you have any specific concerns for my pet? _____
- How long does treatment last? _____

Financial Considerations

- How much does each treatment cost? Will pet insurance cover the fees? Can I use CareCredit to help with expenses? _____
- Are there additional costs outside of treatment I should consider? Travel costs or boarding fees? _____

Experience

- How much experience do you have treating this type of cancer? _____
- Should my pet be referred to a board-certified specialist? _____

Questions to Ask Your Vet During Cancer Treatment

- How do we know if the treatment is working? What should I look out for? _____
- What can I do to manage the side effects for my pet? _____
- What symptoms or side effects should I tell you about right away? What's an emergency or a concern? _____
- Will my pet need additional tests or imaging, and how often? _____
- Should I change my pet's diet? _____