

Lung Cancer Terms to Know for Empowered Care

Biomarker Testing: Identifies the mutation that caused your lung cancer so your care team can match you with the most effective treatment. Mutations include EGFR, ALK, ROS1, BRAF, HER2, among others.

Targeted Therapy: Treats lung cancer by targeting the specific mutation driving the cancer, rather than using one-size-fits-all treatment approach.

Patient Empowerment: Not a one-time event, but a continuous practice of learning, asking and engaging.

Understand Your Diagnosis and Treatment Options

- **Ask “What stage is my cancer?”** Full-body and brain imaging (PET, MRI, CT) help determine this.
 - Request full-body imaging (neck to knees) and brain scans (MRI or CT) to assess cancer spread.
- Request biomarker testing for non-small cell lung cancer—targeted therapies depend on it.
- **Ask “What are all my treatment options—and why are some recommended over others?”**
- Second opinions are your right. You wouldn’t buy the first wedding gown you try on, the same goes for treatment.
- Clinical trials offer access to new therapies and support services. **Ask: “Am I eligible for any trials?”**
 - Trials may include drugs, exercise, wellness, or supportive care and often offer extra resources. [Source](#)

Prepare for Daily Life and Side Effects

- **Ask: “How will treatment affect my everyday life?”**
 - Expect fatigue, nausea, taste changes, constipation or diarrhea, especially around days 7–10 of chemo. Ask how you can best manage these.
- Plan ahead by looking into FMLA, disability paperwork, transportation, childcare, and out-of-pocket costs.
- Meet with a social worker early on as they offer emotional support and help with logistics.
- It’s okay to delay treatment briefly for life events. You have the power to choose. [Source](#)

Communicate Clearly and Advocate for Yourself

- Prepare symptom descriptions so you can share with impact. “I’m short of breath in the shower” is clearer than “I’m short of breath.”
- **Ask “What do you think is happening?” to open dialogue.**
- Bring an advocate to appointments because they can reinforce your concerns.
- If dismissed or misdiagnosed, switch doctors. Your health comes first.
- Your relationship with your oncologist should feel like a partnership. Seek a second opinion, if needed.

Navigate Cultural and Language Barriers

- Ask for a professional interpreter. Apps like Genie or Google Translate can help, if needed.
- You deserve care in your preferred language. It’s a myth that this leads to worse treatment.
- Discuss family dynamics and decision-making roles. **Ask: “Can we document my healthcare proxy or decision-maker?”**
- Cultural humility matters. Providers should understand your family’s role in decision-making. They should ask about the role of religion, complementary medicine, and family dynamics in your care. [Source](#)