



## Understanding Your Cancer Prognosis



### Overview

During cancer treatment, you may wonder how things will turn out. Your doctor can tell you how your cancer is likely to affect you. Your doctor also can explain how you may respond to treatment. This is called your cancer "prognosis." Your prognosis helps you make decisions about your care.

### Labels

When you are given your prognosis, your doctor may use words like "good," "fair" or "poor." These labels describe the most likely outcomes for different types of treatment. Talk to your doctor about these labels and what they mean as you decide on a treatment plan.

### Survival Statistics

A cancer prognosis commonly includes survival statistics. These numbers show how your cancer has affected other patients. Some people want to know the survival statistics, and others don't. If you are interested, your doctor may be able to show you what percentage of other patients have lived at least one year, two years, or five years after the diagnosis. Keep in mind that survival statistics are an average of the histories of many other cancer patients. Your case is unique. Your personal experience may be very different from these averages.

### A Personal Choice

Your prognosis can be hard to talk about – for you, for your loved ones and for your doctor. But your prognosis contains valuable information. It can help you make good decisions as you plan ahead. So if you don't understand something about your prognosis, ask your doctor to explain it.