



Remission: Understanding What it Means for You



Overview

During the course of your cancer treatment, your doctor may tell you that your cancer is in "remission." This is great news, but it isn't the same as saying that you have been cured. There are two types of remission, "partial" and "complete." It is important to fully understand what each diagnosis means.

Partial Remission

If you are told your cancer is in "partial" remission, this means your doctor has noticed a reduction in the signs and symptoms of your cancer. If you have a tumor, partial remission could mean that it has gotten smaller. If you have a cancer such as leukemia, partial remission could mean that there are fewer cancer cells in your bloodstream. Partial remission means that you still have cancer cells in your body, but your situation has improved.



Complete Remission

If you are told your cancer is in "complete" remission, this means your doctor can't find any evidence of cancer in your body. It could mean that all of your cancer cells have been removed or destroyed. It could also mean that cancer cells are still in your body but they just aren't showing up on tests and exams. Because there is still a chance that you could have cancer, your doctor will continue to look for cancer cells during regular checkups.

Recurrence

Many cancers tend to come back after remission. When this happens, it is called a "recurrence." Some patients deal with multiple recurrences of cancer during the course of treatment. Talk to your doctor about your particular cancer so you can learn about the likelihood that it will return and the best way to deal with it if that happens.

