

Making progress in cancer prevention, detection, and treatment requires cancer patients, cancer survivors and healthy individuals to take part in clinical trials.

## What are Clinical Trials?

Clinical trials are studies that evaluate the safety and value of new therapies, diagnostics, and prevention of cancer. Such trials compare the current treatment with a new approach that may improve outcomes for cancer patients. All advances in cancer treatment were evaluated and developed using clinical studies.

## Is a Clinical Study Right for Me?

To help you decide if taking part is right for you, it is important to learn as much as you can about clinical trials. This sheet answers common questions about clinical trials. To learn more, explore the web links provided.

## What are the Different Types of Clinical Trials?

- Clinical trials test the latest cancer drugs, surgery, radiation therapy, or other types of treatment.
- Prevention trials test new drugs, vitamins, minerals, or other supplements that doctors believe may lower the risk of cancer. These trials look at the best way to prevent cancer in people who have never had it, or to prevent cancer from recurring in those who have.
- Screening trials test the best ways to find cancer earlier.
- Quality of Life trials (Supportive Care studies) look at ways to improve comfort and quality of life for cancer patients and survivors.

## What are the Phases of Clinical Trials?

Trials designed to test new drugs are organized in one of four steps, or phases. This structure followed to determine the new drug or treatments safety and effectiveness. For information about the four phases visit: [cancer.stanford.edu/trials/basics/thinking.html#k](http://cancer.stanford.edu/trials/basics/thinking.html#k)

## What are the Potential Risks and Benefits of a Clinical Trial?

One benefit is that the new drug or treatment approach may work better than a current treatment. This is a potential benefit and not guaranteed. Patients may also feel a benefit by contributing to the advance of cancer treatment, knowing that they may be helping other cancer patients in the future. Risks are that the new drug or treatment may not be as effective or may cause more side effects than a current treatment. Each clinical trial has specific risks and potential benefits. If you decide to enroll in a clinical trial, you will go through a consent process that will outline in detail all the specific potential risks and benefits for the trial.

# Information about Clinical Studies

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Choosing to be in a clinical trial is a decision that only you can make. We encourage you to visit the Stanford Cancer Center Health Library ([healthlibrary.stanford.edu](http://healthlibrary.stanford.edu)) to learn more about your cancer. Discuss your treatment options with your doctor and see if a clinical trial might benefit you.

## Can I Stop if I Want?

The government has a system in place to protect people enrolled in clinical trials. You can change your mind, without penalty, and drop out of a trial at any point in the process; before, during, or in the follow-up period of a trial. For more information visit: [cancer.stanford.edu/trials/basics/thinking.html#h](http://cancer.stanford.edu/trials/basics/thinking.html#h)

## Asking Questions

A clinical trial has a team that can answer any questions. Don't hold back your questions. You should feel free to ask questions until you have all the information you need to decide if a clinical trial is right for you. For a list of sample questions visit: [cancer.stanford.edu/trials/basics/thinking.html#d](http://cancer.stanford.edu/trials/basics/thinking.html#d)

## What Happens During a Study?

The clinical trial team, doctors, nurses, social workers, dieticians, and others will work together to provide care, monitor your health, and give you specific instructions. You are a key member of this team. To make sure the trial is successful and the results reliable, it is important that you follow instructions carefully. This includes:

- Scheduling and participating in all of the doctor appointments and tests;
- Taking medicines on time and as directed; and
- Completing logs or answering questionnaires.

## Who Pays for the Study? Will My Insurance Cover It?

There are strategies to help with cost and coverage barriers if needed. See Clinical Trials and Insurance Coverage, available at the website of the National Cancer Institute (NCI), [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

## Resource Guide

You may find the following resources helpful when thinking about being a part of a clinical trial.

- Stanford Cancer Clinical Trials Office: 650.498.7061  
[ccto-office@stanford.edu](mailto:ccto-office@stanford.edu)  
[cancertrials.stanford.edu](http://cancertrials.stanford.edu)
- Stanford Cancer Navigation Services: 650.723.4268
- The National Cancer Institute (NCI): 1.800.4.CANCER  
[cancergovstaff@mail.nih.gov](mailto:cancergovstaff@mail.nih.gov)  
[www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)
- U.S. National Institutes of Health clinical trials registry and results database: [www.clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov)
- CenterWatch: [www.centerwatch.com](http://www.centerwatch.com)