

Advanced Melanoma

Complete discussion guide

A printable set of questions to bring to appointments with your care team. Each section below is also available as its own one-page checklist.

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<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/melanoma/advanced-melanoma>

What Advanced Melanoma Means

Advanced Melanoma

<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/melanoma/advanced-melanoma/what-advanced-melanoma-means>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

-
- ☐ Is my melanoma regionally advanced (stage III) or metastatic (stage IV), and what is the exact stage grouping?

 - ☐ If it is stage III, was the nodal spread microscopic or clinically detected, and are there in-transit or satellite lesions?

 - ☐ If it is stage IV, which sites are involved, and what did my LDH level show?

 - ☐ Can any of the melanoma be removed with surgery, now or after medication?

 - ☐ Will my case be reviewed by a multidisciplinary team, and what systemic treatment would you start with?



Staging Workup and Imaging

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<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/melanoma/advanced-melanoma/staging-workup-and-imaging>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

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- ☐ What is my full TNM stage, and is it a clinical or a pathologic stage?

 - ☐ Which scans will I have, and will they include a brain MRI even though I feel well?

 - ☐ Has my tumor been tested for BRAF — and, if it is acral or mucosal, for NRAS and KIT?

 - ☐ Will my original pathology slides be re-reviewed here, and could that change my stage?

 - ☐ Will my case be presented at a multidisciplinary tumor board before we decide on treatment?



Immunotherapy for Advanced Melanoma

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<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/melanoma/advanced-melanoma/immunotherapy-for-advanced-melanoma>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

- ☐ Which regimen are you recommending for me, and what are its expected response rate and serious-side-effect rate?

- ☐ Given my other health conditions, is the ipilimumab combination too risky for me?

- ☐ How and when will we know whether it is working, and what would you do if an early scan is unclear?

- ☐ How long do you expect me to stay on treatment, and what happens when I stop?

- ☐ If this regimen does not work, what are my next options — targeted therapy, TIL therapy, or a trial?

Targeted Therapy (BRAF/MEK)

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<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/melanoma/advanced-melanoma/targeted-therapy-braf-mek>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

- ☐ Has my tumor been tested for a BRAF mutation, and what exactly did it show?

- ☐ Given my situation, should I start with immunotherapy or targeted therapy — and why?

- ☐ If we use targeted therapy, which drug pair do you recommend for me, and what side effects are most likely?

- ☐ How and how often will we check that it is working, and what happens if it stops?

- ☐ If my stage III melanoma was fully removed, is adjuvant targeted therapy or adjuvant immunotherapy the better fit for me?



Managing Immunotherapy Side Effects

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<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/melanoma/advanced-melanoma/managing-immunotherapy-side-effects>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

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- ☐ Given my regimen, which side effects are most likely for me, and which are the dangerous ones to watch for?

 - ☐ What blood tests will you run before each infusion, and what are you looking for?

 - ☐ At what point would we pause treatment, and at what point would we stop it for good?

 - ☐ If I need steroids, how long would that last, and what else do I need while taking them?

 - ☐ Who do I call after hours, and which symptoms should send me straight to the emergency room?



Neoadjuvant Immunotherapy

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<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/melanoma/advanced-melanoma/neoadjuvant-immunotherapy>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

- ☐ Is my melanoma macroscopic, resectable stage III — the situation where neoadjuvant treatment is used?

- ☐ Would you recommend neoadjuvant immunotherapy over surgery-first with adjuvant treatment, and why?

- ☐ Which regimen would I get before surgery, and how long until the operation?

- ☐ How will the pathologic response be measured, and how would it change what happens afterward?

- ☐ What happens if the melanoma grows during the pre-surgery treatment, or if I have a serious side effect?



Adjuvant Therapy After Surgery

Advanced Melanoma

<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/melanoma/advanced-melanoma/adjuvant-therapy-after-surgery>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

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- ☐ What is my exact substage, and what is my estimated chance of recurrence with and without adjuvant therapy?

 - ☐ Given my substage, do you recommend immunotherapy, targeted therapy, or observation — and why?

 - ☐ Has my melanoma been tested for a BRAF mutation, and what did that show?

 - ☐ What is my personal risk of a permanent hormone problem or another lasting side effect?

 - ☐ Would neoadjuvant treatment before surgery, or a clinical trial, be a better fit for my situation?



Melanoma Brain Metastases

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<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/melanoma/advanced-melanoma/melanoma-brain-metastases>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

- ☐ How many brain lesions are there, how large are they, and are any causing symptoms or swelling?

- ☐ Would you recommend stereotactic radiosurgery, surgery, or both — and in what order relative to systemic therapy?

- ☐ Is my melanoma BRAF-mutated, and does that change whether we start with immunotherapy or targeted therapy?

- ☐ Am I on steroids, and if so, what is the plan to get the dose as low as possible?

- ☐ Is there a clinical trial for melanoma brain metastases that I might be eligible for, and has my case been reviewed by a multidisciplinary team?



TIL Therapy and Newer Options

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<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/melanoma/advanced-melanoma/til-therapy-and-newer-options>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

- ☐ Now that my first-line treatment has stopped working, what are all my options — another drug class, TIL therapy, or a trial?

- ☐ Am I a candidate for lifileucel — is there a lesion large enough to harvest, and am I fit enough for the chemotherapy and IL-2?

- ☐ Which center near me is certified to deliver TIL therapy, and what would referral involve?

- ☐ Is there a role for T-VEC for my skin or lymph node disease?

- ☐ Are there clinical trials — including vaccine or cell-therapy trials — that I should be evaluated for now?

Clinical Trials for Advanced Melanoma

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<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/melanoma/advanced-melanoma/clinical-trials-for-advanced-melanoma>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

Questions to Ask Before Enrolling

- ☐ What is being tested, and what is the comparison? Is there randomization? If so, what does each group receive — does everyone get at least standard treatment?

- ☐ What is the goal for me — shrinking the melanoma, keeping it stable, lowering recurrence risk — and how will that be measured?

- ☐ What are the known and possible risks, and how do they compare with standard treatment?

- ☐ What extra visits, scans, biopsies, and travel are required, and over how long? What costs are covered by the trial, and what falls to me or my insurance?

- ☐ What happens if the treatment does not work or I need to stop? Can I still get standard therapy afterward, and can I leave the trial at any time?

What to Ask Your Doctor

- ☐ Is a clinical trial a reasonable option for me right now, or at a specific point ahead?

- ☐ Are there trials at this center I might qualify for, and are there multicenter trials worth traveling for?

- ☐ Given my mutation status and prior treatment, what kinds of trials am I eligible for?

- ☐ If I join a trial, would I keep seeing you, and how would my care be coordinated?

- ☐ Could a referral to a larger melanoma center open up trial options I do not have here?



Questions to Ask Your Care Team About Advanced Melanoma

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<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/melanoma/advanced-melanoma/questions-to-ask-your-care-team>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

Understanding My Diagnosis and Stage

These answers shape every decision that follows.

- ☐ Is my melanoma stage III or stage IV, and what is the exact substage?

- ☐ Where is the melanoma — lymph nodes only, in-transit skin lesions, or distant organs? Which organs?

- ☐ Can all of it be removed with surgery — now, or possibly after medication?

- ☐ What is my blood LDH level, and is it normal or elevated?

- ☐ Has my tumor been tested for a BRAF mutation? If it is acral or mucosal melanoma, has it been tested for NRAS and KIT?

- ☐ Has my brain been imaged with MRI, even though I feel well?

- ☐ Will my original pathology be re-reviewed here, and will my case go to a multidisciplinary tumor board?

Choosing a Treatment Plan

- ☐ What treatment are you recommending, and what is the goal — cure, long-term control, or shrinking the melanoma before surgery?

- ☐ Why immunotherapy versus targeted therapy for me? If immunotherapy, single-agent or a combination — and why?

- ☐ For each option you are considering, what is the expected response rate and the expected rate of serious side effects?

- ☐ If my melanoma is resectable stage III, is neoadjuvant treatment before surgery an option? What about adjuvant treatment after surgery?

☐ How long would I be on treatment, and what happens when I stop?

☐ If this treatment does not work, what are the next options?

During Treatment

☐ Which side effects are most likely for me, and which ones are urgent? See managing immunotherapy side effects.

☐ Who do I call after hours, and which symptoms should send me straight to the emergency room?

☐ What blood tests and scans will I have, and how often?

☐ How will we know whether the treatment is working, and what would you do if an early scan is unclear?

☐ Can I keep working, exercising, and traveling during treatment? Are any vaccines or medications off-limits?

Surgery and Radiation

☐ Is surgery still useful for me — to remove nodes, an in-transit lesion, or a single distant spot (oligometastatic disease)?

☐ If I have a positive sentinel node, are you recommending nodal ultrasound surveillance rather than removing all the nodes, and why?

☐ Is there a role for radiation — to a lymph node basin, a bone lesion, or a brain metastasis — and how does it fit with my systemic treatment?

☐ What is the recovery from any planned procedure, and how might it delay other treatment?

Second Opinions and Clinical Trials

☐ Would you recommend a second opinion at a high-volume melanoma center? Can you help arrange it without delaying treatment?



- ☐ Am I eligible for a clinical trial — here or elsewhere — and is a trial reasonable now rather than later?

- ☐ Am I a candidate for newer options such as TIL cell therapy?

- ☐ If I join a trial, would I keep seeing you, and how would my care be coordinated?

Follow-Up and Surveillance

- ☐ After treatment, how often will I have exams, blood tests, and imaging — and for how many years?

- ☐ Will follow-up include brain MRI, and how long will that continue?

- ☐ Who does my skin checks, and how often, given my higher risk of a new, separate melanoma?

- ☐ What symptoms between visits should prompt a call?

- ☐ What does "no evidence of disease" mean for me, and what is the plan if the melanoma comes back?

Support and Practical Concerns

- ☐ If I might want children later, should I see a fertility specialist before treatment starts?

- ☐ Is there a nurse navigator, social worker, or financial counselor who can help with costs, work, and insurance?

- ☐ What mental health support and peer support groups do you recommend, for me and for my caregiver?

- ☐ Can I see palliative or supportive care alongside my active treatment to help manage symptoms and stress?

- ☐ What should my family know about my diagnosis, including whether they should have their own skin checks?

Five Questions to Start With

If time is short, these five open up the rest of the conversation:

- ☐ Is my melanoma stage III or stage IV, and can any of it be removed with surgery?

- ☐ Is my tumor BRAF-mutant, and what is my LDH?

- ☐ What treatment do you recommend first, what is the goal, and what are its main risks?

- ☐ Will my case be reviewed by a multidisciplinary team, and am I eligible for a clinical trial?

- ☐ Should I get a second opinion at a high-volume melanoma center?

Living With Advanced Melanoma

Advanced Melanoma

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Appointment date

Doctor's name

-
- ☐ Given where my melanoma is and how it has responded, what is a realistic picture of my outlook?

 - ☐ What exactly is my surveillance schedule — which tests, how often, and for how many years?

 - ☐ Which of my treatment side effects are likely to be permanent, and how are they managed long term?

 - ☐ Can I be referred to palliative or supportive care to help with symptoms and stress while I stay on treatment?

 - ☐ What mental health and peer support do you recommend for me and for my caregiver?
