



Questions to Ask Your Care Team About Advanced SCC

Advanced Squamous Cell Carcinoma

<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/squamous-cell-carcinoma/advanced-scc/questions-to-ask-your-care-team>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

Questions About Your Diagnosis and Testing

- ☐ What does "advanced" mean in my case — is this locally advanced or metastatic disease?
- ☐ Does my pathology report show any high-risk features, such as poor differentiation or deep invasion?
- ☐ Is there any sign the tumor is growing along a nerve (perineural invasion)?
- ☐ Do I need imaging (CT, MRI, or ultrasound) of the lymph nodes, and is a sentinel node biopsy being considered?
- ☐ Has my tissue been reviewed by a dermatopathologist here, or should the slides be re-reviewed?
- ☐ Am I on immunosuppressing medication or have I had an organ transplant — does that change the plan?
- ☐ Will my case be presented at a tumor board, and when will I hear the recommendation?

Questions for Your Dermatologist or Mohs Surgeon

- ☐ Is my tumor still removable with surgery, or has it reached the point where surgery and radiation are no longer enough?
- ☐ If it is removable, what technique would you use, and what is the expected cure rate?
- ☐ How large would the wound be, and who would handle the reconstruction?
- ☐ What structures are near the tumor that could be affected — nerves, cartilage, bone, the eye?
- ☐ Would treatment before surgery to shrink the tumor make the operation smaller or safer?



- ☐ Who is coordinating my overall care, and how do I reach that office between visits?

- ☐ Would you recommend a second opinion at a center that treats many advanced skin cancers?

Questions for Your Surgeon

For a head and neck or surgical oncologist planning a larger operation, including any lymph node surgery:

- ☐ What exactly would be removed, and how would that affect how I look, speak, chew, or see?

- ☐ How likely is it that you will get clear margins in one operation? What if you do not?

- ☐ Will lymph nodes be removed or sampled, and how will that change my recovery?

- ☐ What is the recovery like — hospital stay, time off, drains, wound care?

- ☐ Is radiation or medication likely to be recommended after surgery?

- ☐ How many operations like this do you and this center do each year?

Questions for Your Radiation Oncologist

- ☐ Is radiation the main treatment here, is it being added after surgery, or is it aimed at the lymph nodes as well as the primary tumor?

- ☐ How many sessions, over how many weeks, and what does a session involve?

- ☐ What are the short-term effects (skin irritation, fatigue, difficulty swallowing) and the long-term ones for my treatment area?

- ☐ Do I need a dental evaluation or other preparation before starting, especially for head and neck radiation?

- ☐ What is the chance radiation controls the tumor long term, given its size, location, and nerve involvement?



- ☐ Can this area be treated again later if the cancer comes back?
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Questions for Your Medical Oncologist

When systemic (whole-body) medication is on the table:

- ☐ Are we starting with immunotherapy, chemotherapy or an EGFR-targeted drug, or a clinical trial — and why that one first?
 - ☐ Is the goal to shrink the tumor before surgery, or to control it long term?
 - ☐ What side effects are most common, and how are they managed? Which ones should prompt me to call?
 - ☐ How and when will we know if the medication is working? What scans or exams, how often?
 - ☐ If I have had a solid-organ transplant or take immune-suppressing medication, is immunotherapy still safe for me, and who is coordinating that decision with my transplant team?
 - ☐ What is the plan if this drug stops working or I cannot tolerate it?
 - ☐ Is there a clinical trial I should consider, here or elsewhere?
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Questions About Daily Life, Support, and Cost

- ☐ How will treatment affect my ability to work, drive, and care for my family?
 - ☐ Is there a nurse navigator or social worker who can help with scheduling, transportation, and paperwork?
 - ☐ What will this cost me, and is there financial assistance or a copay program for the medication?
 - ☐ What support is available for the emotional side — counseling, support groups, palliative care for symptom relief?
 - ☐ Who do I call after hours if I have a problem related to treatment?
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- ☐ What does follow-up look like once active treatment ends?
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Questions to Prioritize If Your Time Is Short

If you can only ask a handful, start here:

- ☐ Is the goal of treatment to cure this or to control it?
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- ☐ Can the tumor still be removed with surgery?
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- ☐ Do the lymph nodes need to be checked or treated?
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- ☐ What are my treatment options, and which do you recommend and why?
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- ☐ Has a multidisciplinary team reviewed my case?
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- ☐ Who is my main point of contact, and how do I reach them?
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