Questions to ask your doctor

A tick-box list for appointments about a gynaecological cancer diagnosis or treatment plan. Tick the questions you want answered, and write the answers beside them.

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Before you go: bring a family member or friend if you can, a notebook or phone for notes, and all your reports. It is fine to ask the doctor to slow down, repeat or explain a word again. You will not remember everything, so write the answers down. No question is too small.

Understanding the diagnosis

- ☐ What type of cancer do I have, and where exactly did it start?
- ☐ What are its stage and grade, and what do those mean for me?
- ☐ Can I have copies of my biopsy (pathology) report and all scan reports?
- ☐ Do I need any more tests before treatment is decided? What will each test show?
- ☐ Has the pathology been reviewed by a pathologist who sees many of these cancers?

Treatment options

- ☐ What are my treatment options? Which do you recommend, and why?
- ☐ Will my case be discussed by a team (a tumour board) with a surgeon, a medical oncologist and a radiation oncologist?
- ☐ Will I need surgery, chemotherapy, radiation, or a combination? In what order?
- ☐ If surgery: which operation is recommended for my cancer, and is open or keyhole/robotic surgery better for my diagnosis?
- ☐ What are the benefits and the risks of each option, in plain numbers where possible?
- ☐ What could happen if I wait, or choose not to have a particular treatment?
- ☐ How long will treatment take from start to finish?

Fertility, hormones and menopause

- ☐ Will treatment affect my ability to have children? Is there a fertility-sparing option for my cancer?
- ☐ If I want to protect fertility, what has to happen **before** treatment starts, and how much time do I have?
- ☐ Will I go into menopause because of treatment? What can help with the symptoms?

Preparing for treatment

- ☐ How should I prepare, and is there anything I should stop or start (including medicines and supplements)?
- ☐ How long will I be in hospital, and what will the first days be like?
- ☐ What are the likely side effects, and which ones should I call about?
- ☐ Who is my main contact if I have a question, and how do I reach them?
- ☐ Who can help me with costs, insurance or scheme paperwork?

Recovery and follow-up

- ☐ How long will recovery take, and what should I avoid doing, and for how long?
- ☐ Which warning signs mean I should call at once or go to an emergency department?
- ☐ What is my follow-up plan: how often will I be seen, and what will each visit include?
- ☐ Am I at risk of lymphoedema (long-lasting swelling, often in a leg), and what can I do about it?
- ☐ Should I have genetic testing or counselling, and should my relatives be told about it?
- ☐ What support is available for my emotions, nutrition, rehabilitation or pain?

Second opinion

- ☐ Is it all right for me to get a second opinion? Please release my reports, scans and pathology slides.

My three most important questions

If you only get time for a few, ask these first.

Notes from the appointment