



karuna
dedicated holistic support

the kindest care

Care of the mind

Taking control

It is difficult to hear and absorb everything you are told when you first find out that you have a life-limiting illness. However, understanding as much as you can about your illness and treatment options is critical for both you and your family. Until you clearly understand the reality of your situation, it is challenging to make informed choices and gain a sense of control over your future.

Understand your diagnosis

- It is important that you are clear about your diagnosis. If necessary, ask your doctor to give you information in stages or more slowly and, if necessary, to repeat information until you really understand it.
- Be comfortable about asking questions. You are not going to inconvenience your doctor by asking too much. Write your questions down before your appointment and make a copy to give your doctor. That way if you don't get through all your questions your doctor can easily prepare to answer them at your next meeting.
- Ask your doctor for any reliable, written information that you can take home to read. (Information that you might find or be given from the internet is not necessarily accurate for you.)
- If in doubt, ask for a second opinion.
- It may be of benefit to have a family member or friend with you during consultations, so they too can absorb information, ask questions and take notes for you.

Be as clear as possible about your prognosis

You and your family are able to make the most of this important time if you know whether your illness is curable and, if it is not, what to expect about its progression. Being clear that your illness is life-limiting is the 'go' signal to plan how you want to live the rest of your life and also to attend to the practical things that need to be done. This is a good thing for everyone to do. No-one's life span is certain.

Some health professionals find it difficult to speak openly about end of life, whether it is a certainty or only a possibility, and whether it is likely to happen in the near or distant future. They may want to protect you and your family from distressing news

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or might feel they are letting you down by acknowledging that there is no cure.

You may need to ask your doctor very direct questions in order to get all the information you need regarding your illness, whether it is life-limiting and what to expect.

Consider whether or not to accept treatment

You may need to make decisions about whether or not to undergo treatment. Your family may be important to you in making this decision so you might wish to consult them when making decisions.

For some illnesses there is an option of continuing existing treatments or pursuing new treatments which can buy time but not cure the illness. Some treatments, while not offering a cure, will assist with alleviating pain and other symptoms. Other treatment may extend your life, but the quality of life during that time may be diminished.

To take an informed and proactive role in decision-making, you need to ask your medical team about the possible impacts of treatment options. Asking questions will give you and your family the critical information necessary to make informed decisions about what is the right path for you.

It is your decision whether to go ahead with such treatments or not.

Karuna also has experienced people you can talk with on:
07 3632 8300 or karuna@karuna.org.au



This is a **Support and Learning** resource. More resources available at www.karuna.org.au/resources. Karuna is affiliated with www.fpmt.org



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