

glossary



Lovelace
Cancer Center

A

Abdomen: Often called the belly or stomach, it is the large space that contains the stomach, the intestines, liver, gall bladder, spleen and in women, the uterus, tubes and ovaries. The abdominal cavity is lined with the peritoneum.

Ablate: To destroy the function of an organ or tissue. Radioactive iodine treatment ablates thyroid tissues.

Abscess: A pus-filled area.

AC chemotherapy: Two drugs, adriamycin and cytoxan, commonly used to treat breast cancer patients.

Accrual: The number of patients planned for a given trial.

Acute: Refers to symptoms that start and worsen quickly, but do not last over a long period of time.

Acquired resistance: The ability of a tumor to resist chemotherapy treatment following an initial response.

Adenocarcinoma: A cancer that develops in gland-forming tissue.

Adenoma: A non-cancerous (benign) tumor made up of glandular tissue.

Adjuvant therapy: Anticancer drugs or hormones given after surgery and/or radiation to help prevent the cancer from coming back.

AFP: Alpha-fetoprotein, a tumor marker.

Alopecia: Hair loss or thinning.

Alternative therapy: Refers to treatments that are promoted as cancer cures often by non-medical people. They are unproven because they have not been scientifically tested, or were tested and found to be ineffective. It can be harmful to the patient if used instead of standard treatment.

Amenorrhea: Loss of menstrual periods.

Anaplastic cancer: Cancer cells that grow rapidly with no orientation to one another.

Anemia: Condition in which a decreased number of red blood cells may cause symptoms including tiredness, shortness of breath, and weakness.

Aneuploid: Abnormal amount of DNA in a cell.

Angiogenesis: The process of creating of new blood vessels. In cancer, the development of blood vessels can feed tumors and allow them to grow.

Angiography: see Imaging Studies.

Anorexia: The loss of appetite.

Antibody: Substance formed by the body to help defend it against infection.

Antiemetic: A medicine that prevents or controls nausea and vomiting.

Antigen: A substance that causes the body to produce natural antibodies.

Apoptosis: A genetic event where cells actively trigger their own destruction.

Areola: The circular area around the nipple on the breast, typically darker than the rest of the breast.

Arimidex: Brand name for anastrozole a hormone therapy for advanced breast cancer.

Ascites: Excess fluid in the abdomen (belly). Reasons for ascites include cirrhosis of the liver, abdominal cancer, heart failure and kidney diseases.

Aspiration: A technique for removing fluid from a cyst, or cells from a mass, using a needle and syringe.

Assay: Analysis to determine the presence, absence or quantity of one or more components; a type of test.

Asymptomatic: Medical condition which has no symptoms.

Atypical cell: Mild to moderately abnormal cell when viewed under the microscope, not malignant.

Atypical hyperplasia: Cells that are both abnormal (atypical) and increased in number, may increase a woman's risk of developing cancer in the future.

Autologous transplant: The reintroduction of cells, tissue or organ previously removed from one individual, back into the same individual.

Axillary lymph nodes: Lymph nodes found in the armpit.

B

Benign: Refers to a tumor that is not cancerous. The tumor does not usually invade nearby tissue or spread to other parts of the body.

Bilateral: Involving both sides.

Bile ducts: Tubes that allow bile from the liver and gallbladder to enter the intestine.

Biliary tree: Branched bile ducts.

Biological therapy: Treatment to stimulate or restore the ability of the immune system to fight infection and disease; also called "Immunotherapy."

Biomarkers: Biological or biochemical indicators that detect exposure to carcinogens or predict carcinogenic disposition.

Biopsy: The removal of a small amount of tissue for examination under a microscope to see whether cancer cells are present. Other tests can suggest that cancer is present, but only a biopsy can make a definite diagnosis.

Blood cells: Small structures produced in the bone marrow and circulate in veins and arteries; consists of red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets.

Blood count: The number of red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets in a sample of blood. This is also called a complete blood count (CBC).

Bone density scan: Scan which measures the mineral content of bone and is used to detect osteoporosis.

Bone marrow: The substance inside certain bones that contain the stem cells and are responsible for the manufacture of red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets (see Stem Cells).

Bone scan: A picture of the bones using a radioactive dye that shows injury, disease or healing.

Borderline tumor: Low Malignant Potential (LMP) tumors. May or may not spread and progress.

Brachytherapy: Slow therapy. A radioactive substance is placed into the cancer and allowed to remain several hours to several days. Also called implant therapy.

BRCA1 and BRCA2: Genes that, when abnormal or mutated, indicate an inherited susceptibility to breast and ovarian cancers.

Breast-conserving therapy: A treatment for breast cancer in which the breast is preserved, it usually consists of segmental mastectomy, lumpectomy and radiation therapy.

Breast density: Term describing the proportion of fat to fibrous tissue. Mammography is more effective when screening breasts of less density.

Breast implant: Surgically-placed prosthesis filled with saline or silicone placed on the chest wall to form a breast mound after mastectomy.

BSE breast self-exam: Manual self examination of the breast.

C

Ca-125: A cancer blood test. Usually done for ovarian cancers. It is not specific and many conditions can cause a positive test. It is a good test to monitor the results of treatment for a known cancer.

Cachexia: Dramatic weight loss that can occur from disease.

Calcifications: Calcium deposits in the breast which can be either benign or malignant.

Cancer: A group of more than 100 different diseases that can begin almost anywhere in the body; characterized by abnormal cell growth and the ability to invade nearby tissues.

Cancer screening: A screening test that is done on "normal" people to find a hidden disease. Abnormal screening tests indicate a potential problem that must be resolved by diagnostic tests.

Capecitabine: Generic name for Xeloda, immunotherapy for advanced breast cancer.

Carboplatin: Generic name of chemotherapy drug Paraplatin.

Carcinogen: A cancer-causing agent.

Carcinoma: A cancerous growth that begins from cells that line glands and in the lining of internal organs, a cancerous growth.



Carcinoma in situ: This is not a cancer, but the change that precedes a cancer. Since it is not a cancer, treatment is usually simple and usually completely effective.

Cardiomyopathy: A general term; primary non-inflammatory disease of the heart.

CAT Scan: See Imaging Study.

Catheter: A thin flexible tube through which fluids can enter or leave the body.

Carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA): A blood tumor marker that, when elevated, can indicate the presence of cancer.

Cells: The basic units that make up the human body.

Central venous catheter: A special thin, flexible tube placed in a large vein. It remains there for as long as it is needed to deliver and withdraw fluids.

Cervical: Relating to the neck. Can be the neck of the body, or of an organ, like the neck of the uterus.

Chemoprevention: The use of natural, synthetic (made in a laboratory), or biologic (from a living source) substances to reverse, slow down or prevent the development of cancer.

Chemotherapy: The use of drugs to treat cancer.

Chromosome: Material in the center of a cell that contains genetic information that combines to make DNA.

Chronic: Refers to a disease or condition that persists, often slowly, over a long period of time.

Cervical Intraepithelial Neoplasia (CIN): See Dysplasia.

Cisplatin: Generic name of chemotherapy drug Platinol.

Clean margin: Normal tissue surrounding cancer in surgically removed tissue.

Clinical trials: Medical research studies conducted with volunteers. Each study is designed to answer scientific questions and to find better ways to prevent or treat cancer.

CMF chemotherapy: Three drugs, cyclophosphamide, methotrexate, and 5-fluorouracil, commonly used to treat breast cancer.

Cohort: A group of individuals with a common characteristic. A group of patients in a drug study.

Colonoscopy: See Imaging Study.

Colony-Stimulating Factors (CSF's): Substances that stimulate the production of blood cells. Treatment with colony-stimulating factors can help the blood-forming tissue recover from the effects of chemotherapy and radiation therapy.

Combination chemotherapy: The use of more than one drug to treat cancer.

Complementary & Alternative Medicine (CAM): Treatment of health care problems with the use of acupuncture, homeopathy and herbal therapy. These treatments can include guided imagery, meditation, massage, therapeutic touch, etc., and are often combined with standard therapy.

Complete response: All detectable cancer is gone after treatment. This is not the same as a cure, as there may still remain some cancer too small to detect.

Cone biopsy: A cone shaped piece of tissue removed from the cervix.

Contracture: Formation of a thick scar tissue; in the breast, a contracture can form around an implant.

Contrast agent (or medium): A medical dye taken by mouth or injected used during some imaging studies to highlight body areas that otherwise may not be seen.

Core biopsy: Removal of a sample of tissue using a wide needle to see if cancer cells are present.

Count: A unit of measurement.

CT scan: See Imaging Study.

Curative treatment: Treatment to destroy the cancer.

Cure: A cancer is considered to have been cured if, after treatment, it is no longer detectable. For many cancers this means it has not reappeared in five years. For other types of cancer, five years is not a reliable time span.

Cyclophosphamide: Generic drug equivalent to Cytosan.

Cyst: A fluid-filled sac, usually benign.

Cytosan: Brand name for chemotherapy drug cyclophosphamide.



D

DNA deoxyribonucleic acid): A large molecule that carries genetic information.

Differentiated: Clearly defined.

Diploid: Normal amount of DNA in a cell, can correlate with a better prognosis.

Dissection: Removal of specific tissue, leaving surrounding tissues in place.

Disseminated: Widely dispersed in a tissue, organ or the entire body.

Distant recurrence: Reappearance of cancer at another site.

Docetaxol: Generic equivalent of Taxotere.

Dose limiting toxicity: Side effects that are severe enough to prevent giving more of the treatment in a clinical trial.

Double-blind: A research design in which neither the investigator nor the patient knows whether the patient is given a new drug, or current standard of care, until it is time to analyze the results.

Doxorubicin: Generic equivalent of Adriamycin, a chemotherapy drug commonly used for breast cancer.

Ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS): Cancer cells that develop from the lining of the milk duct but are confined to the ducts of the breast.

Dysplasia: Usually refers to a disorder in the maturation process of squamous epithelium, also called carcinoma-in-situ, and is considered a premalignant change that can progress to a squamous cell cancer. Dysplasias are diagnosed by microscopic examination of a biopsy specimen.

E

Ectomy: Surgical removal of a structure or part of a structure.

Endocrine glands: Glands that secrete hormones into the bloodstream.

Endocrinologists: Doctors who specialize in the care of patients with disorders of the endocrine glands.

Endocrinology: The study of diseases and disorders of the endocrine system (like thyroid diseases and diabetes).

Endometrial carcinoma: Cancer of the lining of the uterus (endometrium).

Endometriosis: Presence and growth of functioning endometrial tissue outside of the uterus; can create pain and infertility.

Endometrium: The lining of the uterus which maintains patency of the cavity and during menstruation it grows into a thick glandular tissue layer.

Endoscopy: An Imaging Study.

Enzyme: A protein molecule that speeds chemical reactions in cells or organisms.

Epithelial ovarian cancer: A cancer from the cells on the surface of the ovary; most common ovarian cancer in adults.

Epithelium: A covering or lining, can be either external or internal.

Erythema: Redness of the skin.

Estrogen: A type of female sex hormone produced by ovaries, adrenal glands, placenta and fat.

Estrogen Receptor (ER) test: Test done on tumor tissue to determine if a tumor is sensitive to estrogen (ER positive) and whether hormone therapy may be effective.

Euthyroidism: Having the proper amount of thyroid hormone in the body.

Evaluable disease: A tumor or tumors which are present on an x-ray or by examination.

Excisional biopsy: Tumor or mass is removed and cut into thin sections that are microscopically studied to see if cancer cells are present.

Experimental trial: When a new cancer drug is developed and tested in humans. The purpose is to determine what an appropriate dose is, whether it has any specific antitumor activity and if it is the same or better than current treatments available. Not all experimental trials involve chemotherapy.



F

Febrile: With fever.

Femara: Brand name for Letrozole, a hormone therapy for advanced breast cancer.

Fibroadenoma: A benign tumor composed of fibrous tissue.

Fibrocystic breast disease: Term used to describe a benign breast condition.

5-FU: A brand name chemotherapy commonly used in breast cancer.

Fixation: Attachment of tumors to deeper tissues.

Fluorouracil: Generic equivalent of 5-FU.

FNA (fine needle aspiration): Biopsy in which cells are removed from a lump by needle and syringe and tested to see if cancer cells are present.

Follicles: Microscopic units that make up the thyroid gland.

Follicular cancer: A type of cancerous growth composed of thyroid cells.

Free T4: The amount of T4 in the bloodstream that is not bound to carrier proteins.

Frozen section: Creation of a sliver of frozen biopsy tissue, used for immediate diagnosis at the time of surgery.

G

Gastrointestinal: Includes the mouth, esophagus, stomach and intestines; having to do with the digestive tract.

Germ Cell Ovarian Cancer: From the egg producing cells of the ovary; usually occurs in children and teens.

Gene: Segment of DNA and the fundamental biological unit of heredity. Contains chemical information to make proteins, control inherited traits and influence the activity of other genes.

Gene markers: Landmarks for a target gene, either detectable traits that are inherited along with the gene or distinctive segments of DNA.

Genotype: The entire genetic makeup of an organism.

Glandular epithelium: The lining epithelium of many internal organs. Cancers that originate from cells of a glandular lining are called adenocarcinomas.

Gluteal musculocutaneous free flap: One of the techniques for breast reconstruction which uses the patient's own tissues rather than an implant.

Grade: Many cancers are assigned a grade according to their microscopic appearance. Grade I cancers are expected to behave the best, Grade III the worst.

Granulomatous Inflammation: A mass or nodules of chronically inflamed tissue what is usually associated with infection.

H

Hemorrhagic: A copious discharge of blood from blood vessels.

Hepatic: Pertaining to the liver.

Herceptin: One of a biological class of drugs known as monoclonal antibodies.

HER2/neu: Human oncogene found to be in elevated amounts in some women with breast cancer.

Histologic grade: Microscopic assessment of difference from normal tissue structure. High grade implies a more aggressive tumor.

Hormones: Natural substances that can influence the function of organs in the body.

Hormone receptors: Proteins on the cell which admit substances to that cell. These substances may be hormones, drugs or toxins.

Hormone therapy: A treatment for cancer that works by removing, blocking or adding hormones.

Hyperplasia: Condition in which there is an abnormal increase in the number of cells in a tissue; may be a premalignant change.



Hyperthyroidism: An abnormality of the thyroid gland in which secretion of thyroid hormone is usually increased and no longer under normal control. Characterized by increased metabolism.

Hypothalamus: An endocrine gland in the brain that releases thyrotropin-releasing hormone (TRH).

Hypothyroidism: Decreased production of thyroid hormone, leading to symptoms of thyroid insufficiency.

Hysterectomy: Surgical removal of the uterus or womb.

Imaging Study: A procedure that creates pictures of internal body parts, tissues, or organs. Imaging studies help to determine a diagnosis, plan treatment, to check whether treatment is working, or to observe a disease over time. Types of medical imaging studies include:

- **Angiography:** a technique used to visualize blood vessels using an injected contrast dye to make vessels visible on various types of X-rays.
- **CT or CAT Scan:** Computed tomography / A series of X-ray pictures taken by a special machine. The machine rotates around the patient taking x-rays from different angles; the images are then processed by a computer and create a cross-sectional x-ray picture of a “slice” of the body.
- **Colonoscopy:** A visual examination of the inside of the colon (intestine) using of a thin flexible scope with camera.
- **Endoscopy:** A visual examination of internal digestive tract using a small thin flexible scope with a camera. May be upper (through the mouth) or lower (through the anus) depending on the structures evaluated.
- **MRI (magnetic resonance imaging):** Using magnetic and radio waves to create detailed images of internal body systems.
- **Ultrasound:** The use of sound waves to generate a picture of the inside of the body.
- **X-ray:** An image of internal body structures.

Immunogenic: Relating to an immune response.

Immunosuppressive: Drugs may dampen the immune system making the patient prone to infections.

Immunotherapy: Genetically reengineered genes used to boost the immune system. It is designed to act only on the cancer cells.

Implant: A man-made device placed in the body for therapeutic purposes.

In situ: Cancer cells are present on the surface of an organ but have not entered the organ.

Incidence rate: The number of new cancers diagnosed annually per 100,000 people.

Incisional biopsy: Removes a portion of the tumor to examine; generally reserved for larger tumors.

Infiltrating cancer: Cancer that has grown into neighboring tissues.

Inflammatory breast cancer: Uncommon type of cancer in which cancer cells block the lymph vessels of the breast. The breast becomes red, swollen and warm with a dimpled (like an orange) appearance.

Informed consent: The process by which a person learns about and understands the purpose and aspects of a proposed treatment before voluntarily deciding whether or not to participate.

Infusion: Delivering fluids or medications into the bloodstream (usually by vein) over a period of time.

Injection: Using a syringe and needle to push fluids or drugs into the body, often called a “shot.”

Institutional Review Board (IRB): A committee of medical specialists, lawyers, ethicists, community representatives, and clergy approved by the federal government to review, modify, approve, or disapprove the research trial. All clinical trials must be approved by an IRB.

Integrative Therapy: The combined offering of standard medical treatment with complementary therapies.

Intraarterial (IA): Into an artery.

Intracavitary (IC): Into a cavity or space.

Intraepithelial Neoplasia: See Dysplasia.

Intraperitoneal: Within the abdominal cavity.



Intrathecal (IT): Into the spinal fluid.

Intravenous (IV): Into a vein.

Invasive: Tumor which grows into and destroys healthy tissue; same as infiltrating.

Invasive cancer: Cancer that has spread outside the layer of tissue in which it started and has the potential to grow into other tissues or parts of the body (also called infiltrating cancer).

Iodine: A nonmetallic element found in food. When iodine is ingested, much goes to the thyroid gland. Iodine is necessary to make thyroid hormone and for normal thyroid function.

J

Jaundice: A yellowish color to skin, tissues and body fluids from excess bile pigments in the body.

L

Laboratory test: A procedure that evaluates a sample from the body to make a diagnosis, plan treatment, check whether treatment is working, or observe a disease over time.

Laparoscopy: Looking into the abdomen with a scope after the surgeon makes several very small incisions; a type of minimally invasive surgery.

Laparotomy: Cutting into the abdominal wall.

Latissimus flap: Flap of skin and muscle taken from the back and used for reconstruction after mastectomy.

LEEP (Loop electrosurgical excision procedure): A technique for removing portions of the cervix with an electrified thin wire loop.

Lesion: A nonspecific term for an abnormal area; can be used to describe a benign or malignant growth.

Letrozole: Generic name for Femara, a hormone therapy for advanced breast cancer.

Leukopenia: A drop in the number of circulating white

cells in the body, making the individual more prone to infection.

Linkage: Genes are said to be linked when they reside close together on the same chromosome.

Lipoma: A benign fatty tumor which forms a lump.

Lobular carcinoma in situ (LCIS): Cancer cells that develop from the lining of the lobules in the breast. LCIS is not considered to be a precursor to cancer, but it is a marker of high risk.

Local recurrence: The return of cancer in or near the primary site.

Local therapy: Radiation therapy or topical therapy where only the area of concern is affected by the treatment.

Localized biopsy: Uses imaging to aid in the biopsy of abnormalities that can be seen, but cannot be felt.

Localized cancer: Cancer that is confined to the area where it started and has not spread to other parts of the body.

Loco-regional cancer: A primary cancer that has spread to regional lymph nodes.

Lumpectomy: The surgical removal of a lump with a margin of healthy tissue.

Lymph nodes: Tiny, bean-shaped organs that help fight infection; part of the lymphatic system.

Lymphadenectomy: Surgical removal of lymph nodes.

Lymphatic system: A network of small vessels, ducts, nodes and organs that carry fluid to and from the bloodstream and body tissues. The lymphatic system drains tissue fluid from all areas of the body.

Lymphedema: Swelling of the arm or hand caused by buildup of lymph usually after an axillary lymph node dissection.

Lymphocyte: A major category of white blood cell that initiates the immune response. Collections of lymphocytes are organized into lymph nodes.



M

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI): See Imaging Study.

Malignant: A term used to describe a cancerous tumor.

Mammogram: A special x-ray of the breast.

Mass: A lump in the body, a tumor. May or may not be malignant.

Mastectomy: The surgical removal of the breast.

- Simple mastectomy involves the removal of the entire breast
- Modified radical mastectomy removes the entire breast, nipple and axillary lymph nodes.
- Radical mastectomy involves the removal of the entire breast along with underlying muscle and lymph nodes of the armpit.

Mastitis: Infection of the breast, sometimes used loosely to refer to any inflammation in the breast.

Mastodynia: Pain in the breast.

Maximum Tolerated Dose (MTD): The highest dose of a drug or other treatment that most people can safely experience.

Measurable disease: Tumors whose size can be clearly measured in two dimensions. Some clinical trials require measurable disease.

Megace: Brand name for megestrol acetate.

Megestrol acetate: Generic name for Megace.

Melanoma: A cancer of the pigment-forming cells of the skin or the retina of the eye.

Menopause: Time when a woman's ovaries cease producing estrogen and progesterone. One of the many symptoms of the cessation of menstruation.

Menstruation: The monthly discharge, during a woman's reproductive years, of blood and tissue from the uterus.

Mesentary: Any of the folds of the peritoneum that connect the intestines to the abdominal wall.

Mesothelioma: A tumor from the cells lining the abdominal cavity (peritoneum).

Metabolism: The use of calories and oxygen to produce energy.

Metaplasia: The normal process by which cervical glandular epithelium changes into cervical squamous epithelium.

Metastatic disease: Cancer that has spread from its original site to other parts of the body. See Metastasis.

Metastasis: (metastases, plural). The spread of cancer beyond the primary site of the cancer and beyond the axillary nodes. Some types of cancer seldom spread. Other cancers have widespread metastases.

Microcalcifications: Small deposits of calcium in the breast, which can show up on a mammogram. Certain patterns of microcalcifications are sometimes a sign of breast cancer.

Micrometastases: Microscopic and presumed spread of tumor cells to other organs.

Minimally invasive surgery: Use of advanced surgical techniques to operate through smaller incisions and tend to have fewer complications and faster healing times than traditional open surgical techniques. Only the surgeon can determine if minimally invasive surgery is appropriate for the patient.

Mitosis: Mitosis is the method by which a dividing cell gives a full complement of the chromosomes to each daughter cell. A mitotically active neoplasm is a cancer.

Mixed mullerian tumor: A type of epithelial tumor with multiple types of cells.

Molar pregnancy: An incomplete early pregnancy. There usually is no fetus and the placental elements continue to grow, behaving like a cancer.

Mucositis gastritis: Inflammation of the mucous membrane, especially that of the stomach.

Mutation: An alteration or change in the DNA of a cell.

Myeloma: A malignant tumor of the bone marrow associated with the production of abnormal proteins.



Myocutaneous flap: Skin, muscle and other tissue surgically moved from one part of the body to reconstruct the breast which has been removed due to cancer.

N

Navelbine: A chemotherapy drug commonly used in advanced breast cancer.

Necrosis: Dead tissue. Necrotic tissue has an odor when infected.

Negative predictive value: The probability that the disease is not present when the test is negative.

Neoadjuvant chemotherapy: Chemotherapy given before cancer surgery to shrink the tumor. Additional chemotherapy may be given after surgery.

Neoplasm: A new growth; may be benign or malignant.

Neuropathy: Disease or abnormality of the nervous system.

Neutropenia: Reduced levels of white cells in the blood.

Nolvadex: Brand name for the drug Tamoxifen.

Non-invasive: Self contained, not growing into or destroying healthy tissue.

O

Omentum: A large fatty fold of peritoneum in the abdomen that drapes over the intestines like an apron.

Oncogene: A gene that promotes the growth of cancer.

Oncologist: A doctor who specializes in treating people with cancer. The five main types of oncologists are medical, surgical, radiation, gynecologic and pediatric oncologists.

Oncology: The study of cancer.

Oophorectomy: Surgical removal of the ovaries.

Osteoporosis: Softening of the bones, or loss of mineral content, that can occur with age.

Ostomy: A surgically created opening in an organ.

P

Paclitaxel: Generic equivalent of Taxol.

Palliation: Treatment given for symptoms caused by a cancer, not necessarily to treat the cancer.

Palliative: An alleviating treatment that can give relief from symptoms, but is not a cure for a disease.

Palliative care or hospice care: Treatment to relieve, rather than cure, symptoms caused by cancer. Palliative care can help people live more comfortably.

Pap smear (Papanicolaou Test or Smear): A test to detect cancer of the cervix and uterus.

Papillary: Branch-like arrangements of tumor cells; the more complex and irregular the branching, the more dangerous the tumor.

Papillary Thyroid cancer: A well differentiated thyroid cancer composed of thyroid follicular cells also called papillary carcinoma. The nuclei of the cells are large and seem to overlap.

Paraplatin: Trade name for the drug Carboplatin.

Partial response: A decrease in the total cross sectional area of all measurable tumors of at least 50% but less than 100%.

Pathologist: A doctor who specializes in interpreting laboratory tests and evaluating cells, tissues and organs to diagnose disease.

Pedigree: A family history in diagram form showing the family members and their relationships to individuals with a certain disease.

Peripheral neuropathy: A condition of the nervous system that usually begins in the hands and/or feet with symptoms of numbness, tingling, burning and/or weakness.

Peritoneum: The lining of the abdominal cavity, which covers organs such as the liver, intestines and reproductive organs.

Phenotype: The physical or biochemical characteristics of an organism, determined by both genetic makeup and environmental influences.



Photosensitivity: Extreme sensitivity to the sun, prone to sunburns. This can be a side effect of some drugs and radiation therapy.

Pituitary gland: A small gland the size of a peanut that is located behind the eyes at the base of the brain. It secretes hormones that control other glands

Placebo: A substance or treatment given to patients in a study which has been created to resemble the actual treatment.

Platelets: A blood element that is part of the mechanism to stop bleeding. When a blood vessel is cut or ruptured, platelets plug the leak.

Platinol: Trade name for the chemotherapy drug Cisplatin.

Pleomorphic: Able to assume different forms.

Ploidy: Degree of repetition of the basic number of chromosomes.

Polyp: A growth of normal tissue that usually sticks out from the lining of an organ.

Port: A small plastic or metal container surgically placed under the skin and attached to a central venous catheter inside the body. Blood and fluids can enter the body through the port using a special needle.

Positive predictive value: The probability that the disease is really present when the test is positive.

Precancer: A change that occurs that can turn into a cancer. Precancerous changes can usually be treated with simple methods with excellent results.

Precancerous: Refers to cells that have the potential to become cancerous. Also called pre-malignant.

Predictive gene tests: Gene testing to identify abnormalities that may cause a person to be vulnerable to certain diseases or disorders.

Predisposition: A tendency to develop a disease that can be triggered under certain conditions.

Prevalence: The number of cancers that exist in a given population. Prevalence is usually unknown because not all of the cancers have been diagnosed.

Primary cancer: Describes the original cancer.

Primary tumor: The original site of a cancer.

Progesterone: One of the female hormones produced by the ovaries.

Progesterone Receptor (PR) test: A test that determines if breast cancer is sensitive to hormonal therapy.

Prognosis: Chance of recovery; a prediction of the outcome of a disease.

Progressive disease: Disease is getting worse.

Prophylactic surgery: Surgical removal of organs to reduce the risk of future cancer.

Prosthesis: Artificial body part that may be created with an implant.

Protocol: Research designed to answer a question; often involves testing a specific new treatment under controlled conditions.

R

RAD (Radiation Absorbed Dose): A unit of radiation delivered to tissue.

Radioactive iodine (RAI): Radioactive isotopes of iodine used in the diagnosis and treatment of some thyroid disorders.

Radioactive iodine uptake (RAIU): A test measuring the amount of orally administered radioactive iodine taken up by the thyroid gland.

RAI ablation: Administration of a radioactive form of iodine (¹³¹I) to try to destroy any remnant (normal or cancerous) thyroid tissue left after surgery in the thyroid bed or neck.

Radiation therapy: Cancer treatment with radiation.

Radiologist: Physician who uses X-rays, ultrasound, MRI, etc. to aid in diagnosis.

Recombinant DNA technology: The technique of isolating genes from one organism and purifying and reproducing them in another organism.



Rectovaginal pelvic exam: Examination of the vagina and the rectum to evaluate the size of the ovaries, contour and mobility of the uterus and feel for masses and growths.

Recurrence: When a cancer that was in remission returns.

Red Blood Cell (RBC): The cell circulating in the blood responsible for carrying oxygen.

Refractory: When the cancer is resistant to treatment, patient may never go into remission.

Regional recurrence: Reappearance of cancer near the original site.

Relapse: When the disease reoccurs after a period in remission.

Remission: The partial or complete disappearance of signs and symptoms of disease.

Resectable: Able to be removed surgically.

Resection: To cut out or remove.

Response: The effectiveness of treatment. A complete clinical response means that a previously measurable cancer has gone away with treatment. A complete surgical response means that even with a surgical exploration there is no trace of a cancer previously known to be present. A partial response means that the measurable amount of cancer has decreased by 50%.

Risk factor: Anything that increases a person's chances of developing cancer.

Robotic surgery: A type of minimally invasive surgery using very small tools attached to a robotic arm to allow surgeon to perform complex procedures.

S

S-phase: Measure of number of cells dividing DNA at any one time. A higher number usually indicates a more aggressive tumor.

Salpingectomy: Surgical removal of the fallopian tubes.

Sarcoma: A cancer that develops in the tissues that support and connect the body, such as fat, muscle bone and cartilage.

Screening: The process of checking whether a person has a disease or has an increased chance of developing a disease when the person has no symptoms.

Sebaceous: Relating to fatty material.

Secondary cancer: Describes either a new primary cancer (a different type of cancer) that develops after treatment for the first type of cancer.

Sensitivity: Refers to the probability that a test will be positive when the disease is present.

Sentinel node: First node to which cancer cells migrate.

Sepsis: Blood infection.

Side effects: Symptoms or medical problems due to treatment.

Signs: Those characteristics that a health care provider can objectively detect or measure.

Specificity: Refers to the probability that a test will be negative when the disease is not present.

Specificity: Refers to the probability that a test will be negative when the disease is not present.

Squamous epithelium: The outermost layer of skin, which is 12- 24 cell layers thick, located on a basement membrane.

Stage: A way of describing cancer, such as where it is located, whether or where it has spread, and whether it is affecting the functions of other organs in the body. Each type of cancer has its own staging criteria.

Stem cell: The cell in the bone marrow that produces both red and white blood cells.

Stent: A slender hollow tube inserted to relieve a blockage.

Stomach: The organ that receives swallowed food.

Stomatitis: Sores on the lining of the mouth.

Stroma: The supporting tissue around or beneath an epithelium. The skin is an epithelium supported by the fibrous fatty stroma beneath it.

Subcutaneous (SQ or SC): Under the skin.



Surgical oncologist: Surgeon who specializes in treating cancer.

Symptoms: Those problems that a patient notices or feels. If a patient feels hot, this is a symptom.

Symptom management: To control problems the cancer or cancer treatment may cause such as pain, nausea, vomiting or shortness of breath.

Systemic therapy: Taken intravenously or orally, goes through the body to attack cancer cells, or to lower the risk of recurrence after surgery.

T

T3 (triiodothyronine): The secondary hormone produced by the thyroid gland.

T4 (thyroxine): The primary hormone produced by the thyroid gland.

Tamoxifen: Anti-estrogenic agent used worldwide as an adjuvant hormonal therapy.

Taxol: Brand name of chemotherapy drug Paclitaxel.

Taxotere: Chemotherapy drug.

Teletherapy: Therapy from a distance. Refers to radiation therapy given by a radiation machine, which is several feet from that part of the body being exposed to the x-ray beam.

Terminal: When an irreversible failure of a critical organ system develops.

Tg test: A test that measures the level of thyroglobulin (Tg) in the blood. Tg tests are used in the postsurgical monitoring of thyroid cancer patients.

Thrombophlebitis: Inflammation of the veins with a clot in the vessel.

Thrombus: A blood clot.

Thyroglobulin (Tg): A large protein that acts as a storage site for thyroid hormones within the thyroid gland. Following surgical removal of a cancerous thyroid gland, the level of Tg in the bloodstream can be monitored to detect thyroid cancer recurrence.

Thyroid gland: A two lobed gland lying at the base of the throat that produces hormones essential for a variety of metabolic processes in the body. When iodine is ingested, much of it goes to the thyroid gland.

Thyroid hormones: T4 and T3, two hormones that tell the body how fast to work and how to use energy. T4 (thyroxine) is the primary hormone produced by the thyroid gland and T3 (triiodothyronine) is the secondary hormone produced by the thyroid gland.

Thyroid hormone suppression therapy (THST): In patients who have had a thyroidectomy for thyroid cancer, physicians usually prescribe a moderate excess of thyroid hormones to suppress thyroid stimulating hormone production by the pituitary gland.

Thyroid hormone therapy (THT): Therapy consisting of thyroid hormone medications.

Thyroid nodules: Small lumps or growths that can be felt in the neck. Imaging tests, blood tests, and fine needle aspiration biopsies (FNAB) are used to perform a clinical evaluation of thyroid nodules.

Thyroid remnant: Some part of the original thyroid gland remaining after thyroidectomy surgery.

Thyroid scan: A picture of the thyroid gland obtained with a scanner and radioactive materials.

Thyroidstimulating hormone (TSH): A hormone secreted by the pituitary gland that stimulates the thyroid gland to produce the thyroid hormones T4 and T3. When the thyroid gland is not working properly, the pituitary releases large amounts of TSH to try to stimulate the thyroid gland into producing thyroid hormone. High amounts of TSH circulating in the bloodstream thus indicating that the thyroid is not secreting enough hormones.

Thyroid ultra: A type of scan that uses sound waves that pass into the body and reflect back to produce images.

Thyroidectomy: Surgical removal of the thyroid gland.

Thyrotropin alfa: The generic name for Thyrogen®.

Thyrotropin: Another name for thyroidstimulating hormone (TSH).



TNM system: Classification based on T (tumor size), N (lymph node involvement), and M (presence or absence of metastatic spread). Various TNM combinations are collected onto staging groups based on similar clinical performance.

Toxicity: Side effects.

Transvaginal Ultrasound (TVS): Ultrasound performed through the vagina to visualize pelvic organs and structures. See Imaging Study.

Trastuzumab: Generic name for Herceptin.

TSH test: A test to measure the amount of thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) in the bloodstream.

Tumor: An abnormal growth of cells or tissues; a mass. A tumor can be benign (noncancerous) or malignant (cancerous, meaning it can spread to other parts of the body).

Tumor marker: A substance in the body that may indicate the presence of cancer. Markers may be secreted by the tumor itself or produced by the body in response to the cancer. Tumor markers are usually specific to each cancer type.

Tumor suppressor genes: Normally, these genes restrict cell growth, but when missing or inactivated by mutation, they permit cells to grow without restraint.

U

Ultrasound: A type of imaging study.

Unresectable: Unable to be surgically removed.

V

Vaccine therapy: Experimental cancer therapy intended to boost the body's immune system by injecting killed or weakened cells, organisms or manufactured materials.

Vaginal Intraepithelial Neoplasia (VAIN): See Dysplasia.

Vulvar Intraepithelial Neoplasia (VIN): See Dysplasia.

Vinorelbine: Generic equivalent of Navelbine.

W

Well-differentiated thyroid cancers: Papillary or follicular thyroid cancers where the cancer cells look very different from 'normal' cells.

White blood cells: Blood cells responsible for combating infections. If the white blood cell count is too low, there is a greater risk for an infection. White cells include the lymphocytes and neutrophils.

Whole body scan (WBS): A scan of the whole body used to view areas of radioactive iodine uptake after its oral administration.

Withdrawal scan: A radioactive iodine whole body scan performed when the patient has been withdrawn from thyroid hormone therapy long enough for thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) levels to rise.

X

Xeloda: Brand name for Capecitabine.

