

WHEN YOUR FOLLOW-UP REPORT MAKES NO SENSE

A question sheet for medical language you were never expected to understand

Reports are written for clinicians.

That matters, because it means you can be handed a scan, pathology result or follow-up letter full of unfamiliar language and still feel as though you should somehow understand it.

You do not need to interpret the report yourself.

You do need a way to turn confusion into useful questions.

DO NOT START WITH THE WHOLE REPORT

Circle or copy the words, phrases or sections you do not understand.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Then take them back to your clinical team.

QUESTIONS THAT CAN CREATE CLARITY

You might ask:

- What is the main message of this report in plain language?
- Is anything here new, changed or unexpected?
- Which part of this report matters most for me right now?
- Does anything in this report change what happens next?
- Is there anything here that is being watched rather than treated?
- Is there a term here that sounds worrying but has a more specific clinical meaning?
- What should I expect the next step to be?

You do not need to ask every question.

Use the ones that help you understand what the report means for your own care.

WHAT NOT TO DO TO YOURSELF

Do not assume the most alarming-looking phrase is the most important phrase.

Do not assume a search result on the internet applies directly to your situation.

Do not feel embarrassed about asking what a word means.

Do not leave the appointment pretending you understood something you did not.

A USEFUL SENTENCE

If you feel overwhelmed, try:

"I have read the report, but I do not know which parts actually matter. Can you talk me through the main points?"

Or:

"Can you explain what this means for me rather than what the term means in general?"

That distinction can be important.

WRITE DOWN THE ANSWER IN PLAIN LANGUAGE

Main message:

What has changed, if anything:

What happens next:

When the next step happens:

Who I contact if I have questions before then:

ONE THING TO REMEMBER

Understanding your report does not mean becoming your own oncologist.

It means getting enough clarity to understand what is happening to you.

Between Appointments™ does not interpret scan, pathology or laboratory reports and does not provide medical advice. This resource is designed only to help you prepare questions for your clinical team.