

Four important questions to consider before choosing a cancer center

1 Can I get a team of specialists in my type of cancer?

There are hundreds of forms of cancer, some with many sub-types. Certain cancers are relatively common and have well-established protocols for treatment, while others are relatively rare. When selecting a cancer center, you should understand what specialists are available for your type of cancer, and how the center organizes for you the full team of specialists you may need. Many hospitals have physicians called oncologists who specialize in cancer but not specific types of cancer. At Dana-Farber/Brigham and Women's Cancer Center (DF/BWCC) in Boston, our oncologists specialize in treating specific types of cancer, such as breast or lung cancer. Many of them focus on specific sub-types of the disease, such as cancers caused by certain genetic disruptions, or affecting women under 40, for example. Because DF/BWCC has such a wealth of experts in each type of cancer, patients benefit from the experience that leads to better outcomes.

Our Boston campus is organized into 12 specialized care centers dedicated to working with adults with each major type of cancer. Every patient and their family becomes part of a team that can include all of the specialists one may need, including medical, surgical, and radiation oncologists, as well as pathologists, radiologists, and nurses. Our team of experts work together to provide a precise diagnosis, then collaborates on a care plan designed just for you, offering the latest options for your specific type of cancer. At our regional centers in South Shore and Milford, our oncologists can see patients close to home, and can draw upon the specialized resources in Boston as needed. Throughout the DF/BWCC system, your care team includes expert clinicians working together to ensure you the best possible outcome at all times.

2 How often do they treat my type of cancer?

Research has shown that experience can mean better outcomes. Surgeons who do many of the same kind of operation are better at it than those who do few of them, and medical oncologists who see hundreds of people with a specific type of lung cancer, for example, are better prepared for all the complexities of the disease. At Dana-Farber/Brigham and Women's Cancer Center, our physicians and nurses work in specialized care centers, dedicating their working lives to one particular type of cancer. Rare cancers that many doctors see a few times in their career are seen here several times a week. Our regional centers can draw upon this expertise and expedite referrals to Boston if necessary.

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3 Can they provide the latest options, including personalized therapies and precision medicine, just for me?

The latest options may include new treatment approaches, including those based upon the genetic make-up of each person's cancer. These options also include the most advanced image-guided surgical procedures, medical therapies, and radiation technologies. Dana-Farber/Brigham and Women's Cancer Center is one of only 49 NCI-designated comprehensive cancer centers in the United States. We have over 800 hundred active clinical trials testing new therapies at any time. Some of our trials have led to targeted drug therapies that have become standard practice. We are also participating in one of the largest personalized cancer medicine research initiatives in the world — all fulfilling the NCI's stated goal of "developing and translating scientific knowledge from promising laboratory discoveries into new treatments for cancer patients". Our regional centers in South Shore and Milford have access to the technologies and clinical trials of our Boston-based campus, and have select clinical trials at their locations as well.

4 Can they coordinate everything I will need, in one place?

In addition to personalized and comprehensive medical care, cancer patients and their families often benefit from non-medical services throughout their care. These services include nutrition counseling, spiritual counseling, art therapies, psychosocial support, complementary therapies such as massage, and lifestyle support in areas including exercise. At Dana-Farber/Brigham and Women's Cancer Center, we understand that cancer affects patients and their families in many ways. We believe these services, and other support services such as financial planning, are an important part of the comprehensive care we provide. We offer support services throughout our delivery system — Boston, South Shore, and Milford — as we believe in treating the whole patient, and providing support to both patient and family.

To learn more about cancer care at Dana-Farber/Brigham and Women's Cancer Center, call **617-732-9130**.

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