

## THE “MUST ASK” LIST

### QUESTIONS FOR YOUR FAMILY DOCTOR

When you visit a doctor’s office, there’s always lots of waiting, followed by the flurry of exam, short conversation, and then NEXT!

It’s rare to feel as though you heard everything the doctor said, and that you understand what you heard.

You need to arrive prepared, even if it’s just an annual check-up.

Arrive with your goals in mind, your questions in hand, and your ears open.

If your annual check-up leads to further tests, and a diagnosis that means you’ve got a challenge ahead of you—anything from cancer to diabetes to hypertension—do your research. Prepare for the visit by looking for information on the condition, and formulating questions that will help you understand, and participate, in your treatment.

**Stay INSIDE the car!**

- How often should I come in for a checkup?
- What does my family history say I should keep an eye on?
- What exercise and nutrition program do you suggest for me?
- What screenings should I have?
- My symptoms are [list them for the doc] - what could be causing them?
- [Once you get an answer to the last question] What treatment do you recommend?
- [If the doctor says watch-and-wait] What symptom changes would indicate I need to come back in?
- Will you prescribe something to manage my symptoms, or treat my condition?
- What is the prognosis, with the prescription and without?
- What are the side effects of the medication you’re prescribing?
- What tests will be necessary? Do those tests have any side effects?
- Will the medications or tests interact negatively with the medications I’m already taking?
- Are there any treatment options you haven’t mentioned?
- How long will treatment last?
- When will recovery be complete?

### QUESTIONS FOR ANY SPECIALIST

- What is causing my symptoms?
- What is the treatment you recommend?
- Is additional testing required?
- How long will treatment take?
- What’s the cure rate?
- If there is no cure, can it be managed?
- Given my diagnosis, what’s your prognosis?
- Are there any experimental treatments available?
- How much will treatment cost?
- Will I have to be hospitalized?
- Are there support groups for people with my condition?

Some great resources:

**www.clevelandclinic.org** The Cleveland Clinic online, great info on all kinds of medical topics

**www.mayoclinic.com** The Mayo Clinic online, another great source for all kinds of medical info

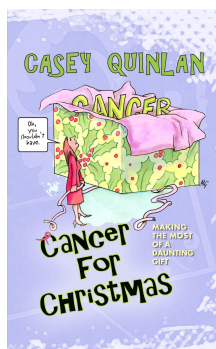
**www.webmd.com** Major resource, including symptom checkers and “talk to the doc” features

**Dr. Susan Love’s Breast Book** (Susan Love MD/Merloyd Lawrence) If you have boobs or know someone who does, this is The Bible

**The Middle Place** (Kelly Corrigan/Voice-Hyperion) A beautifully written survivor story by a young mother—touching, funny, and terrific

**Cancer Schmancer** (Fran Drescher/Grand Central Publishing) The Nanny got cancer, and wrote a very funny and inspiring book about her experience

**www.cancerschmancer.com** Fran Drescher’s online cancer advocacy—terrific information, great community



**STAY INSIDE THE CAR ; )**

## QUESTIONS FOR YOUR BREAST CANCER SURGEON

- Given this diagnosis, what treatment options would you suggest?
- In your experience, statistically how many patients are lumpectomy candidates and how many mastectomy, with my same circumstances?
- What ‘s your approach with a lumpectomy?
- What’s your approach with a sentinel-node biopsy?
- What type of marker do you use to identify the sentinel nodes?
- How long does the surgery typically take?
- What’s the recovery process like?
- How often have you discovered that a mastectomy was necessary, when you had planned a lumpectomy?
- What’s the process with an axial excision, if you find out that’s necessary?
- What kind of complications can arise with a lumpectomy?
- With a mastectomy?
- With an axial excision?
- Who decides on radiation and/or chemo?
- What’s the treatment for hormone-positive cancer?
- What’s the treatment for HER2-positive cancer?
- Who would you recommend as an oncologist?
- Who would you recommend as a radiation oncologist?

## The most important question you can ask:

- **Why?**

Keep that question ready as a follow-up to any answer you get.

Remember, doctors aren’t gods. They’re human beings, and sometimes the need to be reminded of that fact ;)

Stay positive, but be firm. Keep asking the same question until you get an answer. If that means seeing another doctor, do it.

It’s your body. It’s your life.

Live it.

Also, make sure you understand all the costs associated with your treatment. Find out if there are any resources to help you cover costs that aren’t covered by insurance, such as travel.

**Never stop asking questions...**



A portion of the sales of my book, “Cancer for Christmas: Making the Most of a Daunting Gift”, goes to the Save the Tatas Foundation—Imagine a World Without Cancer.