

# Other subspecialties of internal medicine

Our focus on cancer is similar to the focus of other internal medicine subspecialties concerned with specific organs, conditions, diseases, or age groups. Other subspecialties include gastroenterology (digestive tract), cardiology (heart), pulmonology (lungs), nephrology (kidneys), rheumatology (arthritis), hematology (blood), hepatology (liver), endocrinology (diabetes and other glandular disorders), infectious diseases, allergy and immunology, sports medicine, geriatrics, and adolescent medicine.



## Clearing up some confusion

We doctors of internal medicine are also known as “internists.”

This should not be confused with “interns,” who are doctors in their first year of training after medical school.

Nor are we the same as “general practitioners” (GPs), or “family physicians” (FPs), whose practices may include surgery, obstetrics and pediatrics, and whose training is not solely concentrated on adults.

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# Your Internist is a Medical Oncologist



## We specialize in cancer

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Medical oncology is the subspecialty of internal medicine that focuses on treating cancer with medicines and treatments such as chemotherapy and radiation. In addition to medical oncologists, there are two other types of oncologists — surgical oncologists and radiation oncologists. In most cases, when a person is diagnosed with cancer, one of these oncologists takes charge of the patient's overall care through all phases of the disease.

We medical oncologists must first complete seven or more years of medical school and postgraduate training and attain Board Certification in Internal Medicine. Then, for an additional two years, we are broadly trained in all areas of oncology. Some of us also further specialize in specific types of cancer, such as breast cancer, lung cancer, prostate cancer, leukemia, or lymphoma.

## What we do

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We oncologists care for patients from the moment of diagnosis throughout the course of the disease. We explain the diagnosis and meaning of the disease stage, discuss various treatment options, recommend the best course of treatment, deliver optimal care, and improve quality of life — through curative therapy and palliative care with pain and symptom management.

## Tell your family history

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Be sure to give your oncologist a complete and accurate family medical history. As many as 15% of cancers are caused by genes passed directly from a parent to a child. Family medical information is critically important in managing patient care.

## We work as a team

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Once diagnosed, cancer is often treated by a team of oncologists, usually at least two of the three types — medical, surgical or radiation oncologists. The team may also include a pathologist, a diagnostic radiologist, and an oncology nurse.

This team approach combines the unique skills of several different disciplines into one consulting group. This is an advantage, since cancer treatment frequently involves a combination of chemotherapy, surgery and radiation.

In new or difficult cases of cancer, a tumor board will be called upon to review the case. Consisting of medical experts from all relevant disciplines, tumor boards consult on the best course of treatment for an individual patient.

