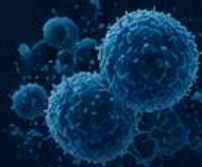


Decoding Your Pathology Report

A step-by-step guide to understanding how your diagnosis is determined and what it means for your care.



Pathology is the process of examining cells or tissues to detect disease. Your report follows a logical pathway to determine the nature, extent, and biology of your cancer.

PHASE 1



The Biopsy (The Investigation)

A sample of tissue or fluid is removed from the body so it can be examined under a microscope.



Biopsy or Surgical Resection

A tissue or fluid sample is collected from the suspicious area.



Benign (Non-Cancerous)

The cells are normal and not cancerous.

Outcome: Routine monitoring or follow-up as recommended by your doctor.

NO

Are the cells cancerous?

YES



Malignant (Cancerous)

Cancer cells are present.

Outcome: Proceed to further testing to understand the characteristics and extent of the cancer.

PHASE 2



Tumor Characteristics (The Description)

Determines the type of cancer and how aggressive it may be.



Tumor Type

The exact type of cancer is identified (e.g., adenocarcinoma, carcinoma, melanoma). This helps guide treatment decisions.

Tumor Grade (1-3)

Describes how abnormal the cells look and how quickly the tumor is likely to grow.



Low Grade (1)

Cells look more like normal tissue and tend to grow slower.



High Grade (3)

Cells look very abnormal and tend to grow and spread faster.



T - Tumor

How large is the original tumor? Has it invaded nearby tissue?

Examples:

T1: Small, localized
T4: Large or invades nearby structures



N - Nodes

Has the cancer spread to nearby (regional) lymph nodes?

Examples:

N0: No regional node involvement
N1-N3: Increasing levels of spread



M - Metastasis

Has the cancer spread to distant parts of the body?

Examples:

M0: No distant metastasis
M1: Distant metastasis is present

PHASE 3



TNM Staging (The Geography)

Determines how far the cancer has spread in the body.



Final Stage (I-IV)

The combination of T, N, and M results determines the overall stage.
Stage I (earliest) → Stage IV (most advanced)

PHASE 4



Tumor Markers & Biomarkers (The Personalization)

Specialized tests that reveal the unique biology of your cancer to guide personalized treatment.



Biomarker Testing

Tests check for specific proteins, hormones (e.g., ER/PR, HER2), or genetic mutations in the tumor. These results help predict how the cancer may behave and which treatments will work best.

Are actionable markers present?

YES

NO



Marker Positive

You may be eligible for targeted therapies, immunotherapies, or clinical trials.
Treatment is tailored to your cancer's biology.



Marker Negative

Targeted options may not be available.
Treatment often relies on chemotherapy, radiation, or surgery.



Every path is unique.

This framework helps your care team understand your cancer and design the most effective treatment plan for you.



Bring This With You

Use the "Questions for Your Oncologist" checklist to make the most of your appointments.