Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Common Questions About the Oncotype DX® Test

This information answers common questions about the Oncotype DX test.

What is the Oncotype DX test?

The Oncotype DX is a test that looks at genes in breast cancer tissue. It may predict:

- Breast cancer prognosis (prog-NO-sis). Prognosis is the chance of cancer coming back. If cancer comes back, it's called recurrence (ree-KER-ents).
- If having chemotherapy (chemo), along with hormone therapy, will lower the chance of cancer recurrence.

Your test results can help you and your medical oncology (cancer care) team make the right treatment plan for you. Your medical oncology team is also called your care team.

What type of cancer is the Oncotype DX test used for?

The Oncotype DX test can be done on early-stage (stage 1 or 2) breast cancers that are estrogen-receptor positive and HER2 negative.

Estrogen-receptor positive cancers are cancers that have receptors for estrogen. HER2 negative cancers are cancers that do not have large amounts of the human epidermal growth factor protein.

When is the Oncotype DX test done?

During your surgery, your surgeon will take out the breast cancer tissue. They'll send the tissue sample to MSK's Pathology Department. A pathologist will look at the tissue sample under a microscope and write a pathology report about it.

The pathology report will be ready about 10 days after your surgery. Once the report is ready, the pathologist will send the tissue sample to a special lab for the Oncotype DX test.

How long will it take to get my Oncotype DX test results?

It will take at least 2 weeks for your care team to get your test results. They'll talk with you about your results at your consultation.

What is a recurrence score?

The Oncotype DX test looks at a group of 21 genes in the breast cancer tissue sample. Based on what it finds, it gives you a recurrence score. The recurrence score tells you how likely the cancer is to come back.

Your test results will include a recurrence score from 0 to 100. A low recurrence score is 25 or lower. A high recurrence score is 26 or higher.

If you have a low recurrence score (0 to 25)

- The chance the cancer will come back is low. This does not mean the cancer will never come back.
- The benefits of chemo may not be worth the side effects for you. We may still recommend chemo for some young people with recurrence scores of 25 or lower.

If you have a high recurrence score (26 to 100)

- The chance the cancer will come back is higher. This does not mean the cancer will definitely come back.
- Adding chemo to your cancer treatment may lower your risk of the cancer coming back.

If I don't need chemo, do I still need hormone therapy?

Talk with your care team about the best treatment plan for you. If your cancer cells are estrogen-receptor positive, they may recommend hormone therapy even if you don't need chemo.

Hormone therapy stops or slows the growth of cancer by blocking the hormones that cancer cells need to grow. Most hormone therapies are given as oral medicine (pills you swallow).

Is the Oncotype DX test covered by insurance?

Most insurance companies cover the Oncotype DX test. The company that runs the test will contact your insurance company for approval.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Common Questions About the Oncotype DX® Test - Last updated on September 16, 2026
All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center