



## It's gynecologic cancer! What now?!

### A guide for the time right after diagnosis

**Aga Szućik**

If I were to point to the most emotionally difficult period of my life, it would be the time just after I found out I had cancer. Nothing hit me harder—not the metastases, the chemotherapy, radiation, nor any personal, family, or professional crisis. I'd compare the feeling right after receiving a cancer diagnosis to the moment when the plane you're flying on suddenly starts falling. Your life stops; every cause-and-effect chain loses meaning, and nothing exists anymore. Although you're surrounded by healthcare workers, family, and friends, they all seem distant, as if standing on the shore of a frozen lake, while you stand alone in the middle. They call out: Walk, stand still, lie down, here's a leaflet, so young and cancer, you have to fight, it'll be fine, oh my God, it's awful! And you just stand there, not knowing if the ice will crack faster if you stay put or if you take a step in any direction. Because no matter what you do, that something is inside you.

Right after the diagnosis, cancer feels like a lion, and you feel like a tiny antelope with a sprained ankle. You can cry, squirm, bite, or try to run, but it doesn't matter—the lion's got you. The ice under your feet is thin—frozen time. The plane is falling—your thoughts and life plans. The lion is approaching—you don't know what awaits, and you can't do anything. It feels like someone pressed a button, flushing everything away. You spiral down with the water and the mess that caught you off guard.

I can easily describe those emotions because I remember them vividly, but I no longer feel them. I now know that life and time continue after the diagnosis. I've made peace with my thoughts. I sit behind a tree, checking every few months to make sure the lion is still at a safe distance. However, every day, someone new ends up on the frozen lake with a diagnosis: cervical cancer, ovarian cancer, breast cancer, uterine cancer, vulvar cancer, fallopian tube cancer, or vaginal cancer. I'm not omnipotent—nor am I a gynecologist, oncologist, or psycho-oncologist—but I want to help because I wish someone had helped me when my plane was falling. So, I've prepared a simple guide. If someone close to you gets a diagnosis of gynecologic cancer—or if it happens to you—open this text, download it, print it, and take as much as you need to navigate your journey.



## I Was told at my gynecological appointment that I probably have cancer! What now? 12 straightforward questions and answers

### 1. What does it mean that I have cancer?

Your disease means that for some reason, your body didn't eliminate a faulty cell and allowed it to divide. Now there are more of those cells, multiplying fast enough that quick action is needed to remove them before they spread throughout your body—but not so fast that metastases will suddenly appear. That's not how it works. Don't blame yourself—if there were a guaranteed way to prevent cancer, no one would get it. This is not your fault, stupidity, or anyone's neglect. Even if you did something statistically linked to increased cancer risk, you never deliberately chose to have cancer, did you? There's no point dwelling on the past—it's better to focus on what you can do now.

### 2. Am I going to die?

Your diagnosis is not a death sentence, and statistics based on hundreds of cases don't predict your personal future. Assuming you'll end up in the most pessimistic 10%, 40%, or 80% doesn't help—many people make up the remaining 90%, 60%, or 20%. Instead of guessing, it's better to focus on treatment and maintain hope. Maybe you've heard that cancer is incurable, but that's only formally true. You can eliminate so many cancer cells that your life and test results will resemble those of a healthy person. Think of it like someone recovering from alcohol addiction—the disease is formally still there, but with the right control, it has no real impact on life. We have treatments for cancer, and every day, many people receive results showing no signs of the disease. Even in severe cases,

some live to old age, in remission, and with full physical and mental capacity. Of course, cancer can be fatal, but right now, you are alive—and the best thing you can do is focus on healing instead of imagining the worst-case scenarios.

### 3. When will I receive a full diagnosis?

Cancer diagnosis is a multi-step process that can take several weeks. It's not like you walk into a machine that instantly tells you where the cancer is. The most precise tests—histopathological examinations—are conducted in labs on tissue samples or removed organs. However, within a month at most, you'll have clarity, thanks to our healthcare system's fast-tracking of cancer cases through "cito" labels or the so-called DiLO card. Hang in there.

### 4. What should I do first?

Make sure you're in good hands with an excellent gynecologist or oncologist. Sometimes one person can cover both specialties—check out a list of recommended doctors at [agaszuscik.com/lista](https://www.agaszuscik.com/lista). Don't waste time wandering from door to door or relying on random recommendations. If you need to travel a bit for an appointment—go. Ensure your treatment is modern, efficient, and as stress-free as possible.

### 5. But my world has collapsed!

I understand. You might feel frustrated reading this, thinking this guide won't make your cancer disappear. But please keep reading. Your emotions will be turbulent and varied. Don't expect superhuman strength from yourself or force yourself into a task-oriented mindset. It's okay to feel scared. It's okay to cry and scream, "Why me?" If these emotions are expressed now, you'll come to terms with the facts sooner. But if you feel nothing, stay in bed all day, or ignore phone calls for days—seek help immediately.

### 6. But my world hasn't collapsed!

Many people initially say, "I'll manage, I'm strong." But days later, they break down. That's okay. Sometimes initial strength masks denial. Whatever you're feeling is valid, and you have the right to experience your emotions.

### 7. What about my loved ones?

Remember—you're alive, and you can recover. Your family and friends will struggle too. Some moments will strengthen your relationships; others will be challenging. Don't force yourself to keep anyone in your life if they burden you rather than support you.

Communicate openly with your loved ones. They can often see more than you think, even children.

## 8. Do I need psychological help?

A psychologist specializing in cancer care is called a psycho-oncologist. It's important that the person has qualifications both as a psychologist and a psycho-oncologist. Cancer impacts every part of life and can feel overwhelming for almost anyone. I strongly recommend seeking such help right away.

- On Wednesdays from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM, you can call the Rak'n'Roll hotline at +48 604 51 51 51.
- The PTPO helpline (+48 800 08 01 64) is available Monday through Friday from 6:00 PM to 10:00 PM.

I also highly recommend Unicorn Association, especially their Simonton Therapy. You can ask the facility where you're being treated about psycho-oncological support; it's often covered by insurance or offered by a foundation.



## 9. Can others with cancer help me?

Yes, their support is invaluable. Look for online groups such as "[AMAZONKI życie po diagnozie RAK PIERSI](#)" or "[Syrenki na gigancie](#)."

## 10. What lies ahead for me?

It's not like you have to choose between endless treatment options, and if you choose wrong, it will be disastrous. For specific cancer locations, types, and stages, there are established, effective treatment paths that your medical team will follow. Whether you'll have surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy, or other treatment depends on the type and stage of your cancer and individual factors.

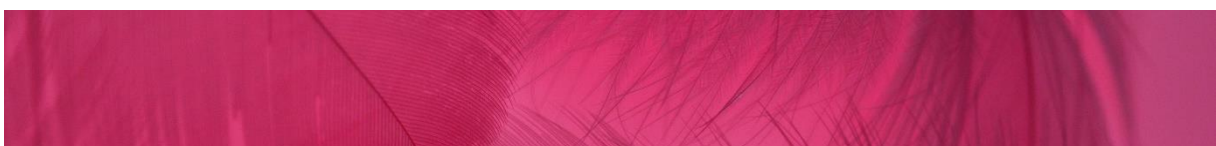
- **Surgery:** If you have gynecological cancer (other than breast cancer), you will likely undergo a hysterectomy, which involves the removal of the uterus, fallopian tubes, and possibly ovaries, along with suturing the vaginal apex. While it may sound daunting, this surgery often changes very little in your life—you can still enjoy sex, running, hiking, and wearing your favorite jeans. Make sure to find a good doctor to perform the surgery laparoscopically, minimizing scarring.
- **Breast Cancer:** If you have breast cancer, you may undergo a mastectomy (removal of the breast), but reconstruction during the same procedure is now standard—you wake up with a reconstructed breast. Don't cling to these organs; their removal is the safest route.
- **Chemotherapy:** It doesn't have to be a lost time—remember the Nationale Nederlanden campaign on cancer prevention? I was part of it, even while undergoing chemo! Whether you lose your hair depends on the type of chemotherapy, but by now, you've probably realized that a hairstyle isn't the most important thing.
- **Radiotherapy:** Radiation isn't painful, though traveling to the hospital and dealing with side effects can be tiring.

Whatever discomfort you experience during treatment, medicine offers solutions, more or less effective, to help. Until your treatment plan is clear, don't overthink.

Finally, terms like "inoperable stage" or "palliative care" don't mean nothing can be done. They are still treatment approaches, offering hope for the best possible quality and length of life.

## 11. How much will it all cost?

Don't worry – oncological treatment in Poland is fully covered by the National Health Fund (NFZ). You can access modern laparoscopic surgery, chemotherapy with scalp cooling to help retain hair, and even dietary and psycho-oncological care, all within the public healthcare system. The key is finding the right facility.



## 12. What comes after?

This phase you're in now is the hardest. I promise it will get easier. I hope that after treatment, you'll return to a new, fuller life, living as I do now—happier and more courageous.

For now, try to spend your free time relaxing, not burying yourself in difficult emotions, but also allow yourself to release what you're feeling. Avoid too much internet research (limit yourself to the Zwrotnik Raka portal – [zwrotnikraka.pl](http://zwrotnikraka.pl)). Don't trust practitioners of alternative medicine. Spend time with your loved ones and engage in your hobbies. Check out my blog and website, and if you need to talk, feel free to write or call me.

The time you're in now, during the diagnostic process, is still a part of your life. Regardless of the disease, life goes on. I made the mistake of pausing my life for an entire month during the diagnostic process and for two more weeks waiting for histopathology results after surgery, convinced I was going to die soon. But I didn't. I now have great results and feel healthy. In fact, cancer has been not only the worst but also the best thing that has happened to me.

You can also find this text at: [agaszuscik.com/przewodniki](http://agaszuscik.com/przewodniki)



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