

What to know when
Choosing a cancer program.



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When faced with the diagnosis of cancer, you are also faced with a number of important decisions. One critical decision is choosing a cancer center that will provide the best care available. This decision deserves research and careful consideration.

When making your decision, consider:

Accreditations of the facility.

How comprehensive and convenient is the care?

Is there a full team of specialists working together?

Credentials of the clinical team.

Range of treatment options.

Access to a variety of clinical trials for the type of cancer you have?

What do patients say about the cancer program?

This booklet provides an overview of important questions to ask and issues to consider. We hope it helps guide you to better health.

Q. What accreditations or distinctions does the cancer center have that reflect quality or ranking?

Cancer programs are ranked by independent sources and also receive accreditation based on services offered and the quality of those services. There are several accreditations to verify before selecting a cancer program. These include American College of Surgeons, Association of Community Cancer Centers, Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments, and COLA.

The Aspirus Regional Cancer Center, a member of the Association of Community Cancer Centers, has been granted a three-year certification of approval as a community hospital comprehensive cancer program by the Commission on Cancer of the American College of Surgeons. This places us among the top 28% of cancer programs in the nation. The Aspirus Regional Cancer Center laboratory is accredited by the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments, and has been given the highest commendation, the Laboratory Excellence Award, from COLA, a national health care accreditation organization.

Q. What kind of support services are offered?

The diagnosis and treatment of cancer is more than effective drug therapy and clinical care. The journey through the disease requires compassion and understanding of your emotional condition. A patient-focused cancer center provides a wide range of counseling and support groups, spiritual care services, and opportunities to connect with experienced professionals who will talk with you and your family about how to cope emotionally with the disease.

Patients at the Aspirus Regional Cancer Center say there is a “feeling of care” here that is unique. Our multi-dimensional care structure is centered on offering the area’s most advanced diagnostic and treatment technologies while paying close attention to our patients’ emotional, social and spiritual needs as well. We have social workers to help you cope with the stress and uncertainty of your diagnosis and assist with daily life needs. Pastoral care representatives are here to help with spiritual needs as well as communication challenges with family and friends. We work closely with support groups to help connect you with people who are or have been where you are. We understand the questions, the emotional ups and downs, the treatment, and the physical challenges—we are with you through it all.

Q. How convenient is the access to the full range of services you will require?

Cancer care may involve physician examinations, surgery, chemotherapy treatments, radiation treatments, diagnostic scans, lab tests, overnight care, rehabilitation, treatment education, nutritional counseling, and access to support groups. Some cancer programs have different site locations for each of these varying services, requiring the patient to drive between service sites. In addition, such a fragmented service structure often complicates and delays the relay of records, instructions, and other vital patient information between service areas. For many patients, the inconvenience and prolonged waiting associated with multiple-site services adds to the stress of already stressful circumstances.

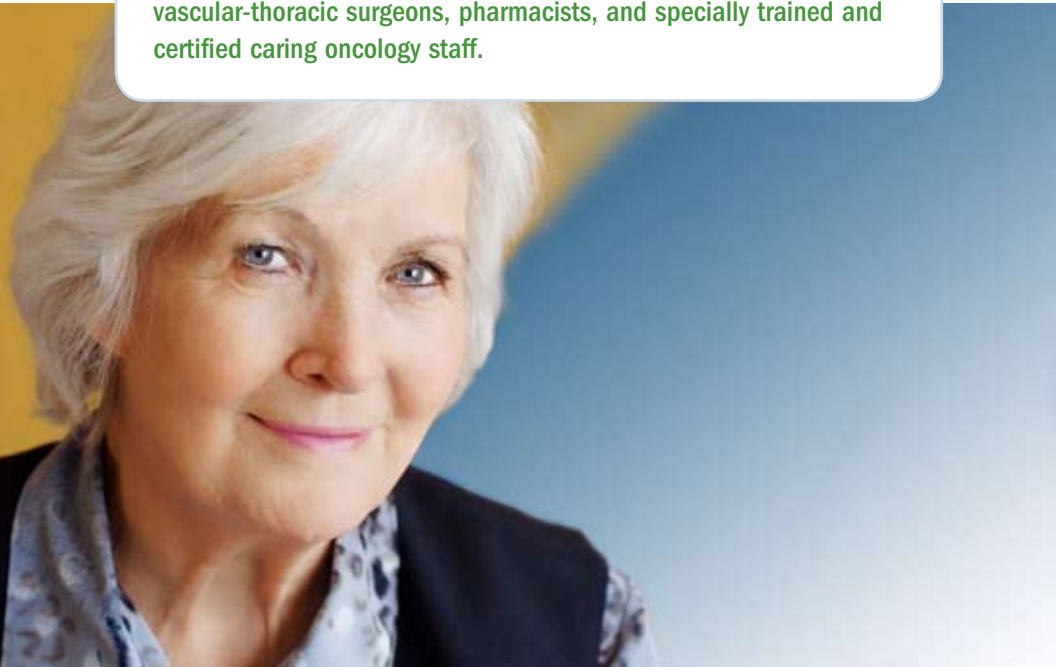
The Aspirus Regional Cancer Center provides a comprehensive range of services within one convenient location. We enhance patient convenience by having our cancer specialists travel to clinics in Antigo, Medford and Merrill to meet with patients.



Q. Is there a full team of specialists working together to make sure you have the best possible treatment plan and outcomes?

When seeking cancer care, you want to make sure you have access to a full team of specialists and that the specialists are collaborating for your best treatment plan.

At the Aspirus Regional Cancer Center, patients benefit from the collaboration of a whole team of specialists working together to provide each patient the optimal treatment plan, including oncologists, surgeons, gastroenterologists, gynecologists, pulmonologists, radiologists, urologists, neurosurgeons, cardiovascular-thoracic surgeons, pharmacists, and specially trained and certified caring oncology staff.



Q. What are the credentials of the clinical staff?

Physicians achieve board certification as a standard of quality, assuring they have passed examinations verifying competence and experience in their field. In addition, a quality cancer program will have a full team of specially trained staff in the field of oncology. Check to assure that physicians are board certified in an area of specialty relating to the cancer care you need and that the other cancer specialists caring for you or your loved ones have special training.

At the Aspirus Regional Cancer Center, all cancer specialists are board certified in a specialty related to advanced cancer care. Our cancer care team is made up of specialists in medical oncology, hematologic disease and radiation oncology. They meet and confer with colleagues across the Aspirus network to develop an individualized treatment plan tailored to each patient's unique needs. In addition, many of our nurses are oncology certified nurses. To be certified means they have passed an examination proving their proficiency in the field of oncology. Our specialty training does not stop here—our team also consists of board certified medical physicists, board certified medical dosimetrists, registered radiation therapists, medical laboratory technologists and certified pharmacists, as well as a full group of other supportive, caring staff.

Q. Will you have access to innovative new treatments and clinical trials?

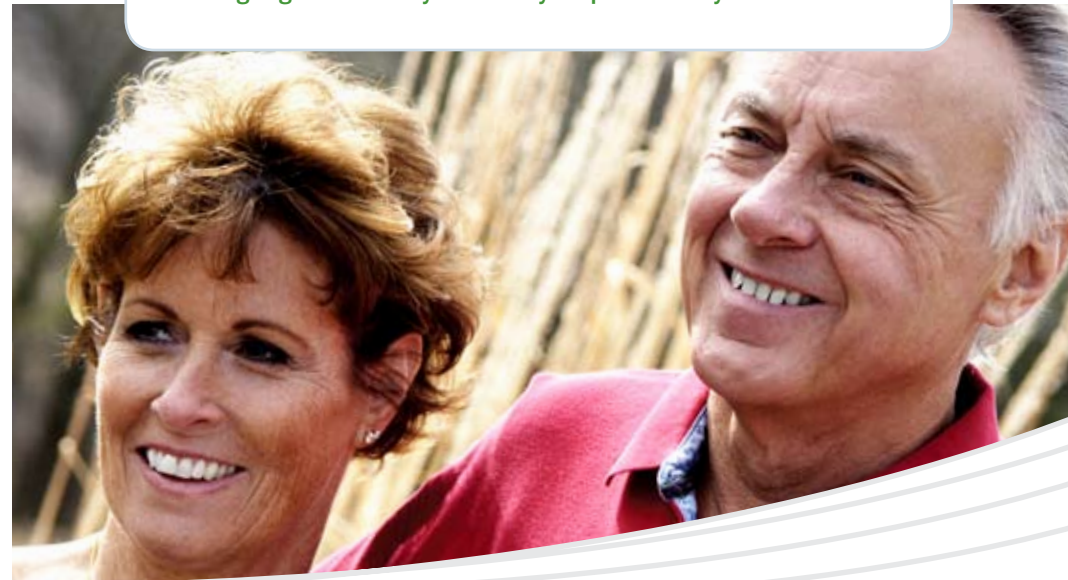
Every cancer patient is looking for hope and the best treatment available. Access to the latest research and technology in an environment of compassion and support is the foundation of hope. Recent studies have shown that patients who participate in clinical trials have outcomes as good, if not better than those who do not participate. One advantage of participation in a clinical trial is the possibility that a new treatment will turn out to be better than an established one. A Phase I study looks at how a drug should be given, how often, and in what dosage. It does not intend to treat a specific type of cancer. A Phase II study will show how well a drug works against specific types of cancer. A Phase III study will compare the investigational drug to the treatment considered the standard treatment.

Through our membership in the Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group (ECOG), the Radiation Therapy Oncology Group (RTOG), the Wisconsin Oncology Network (WON), and through partnerships with various pharmaceutical companies, the Aspirus Regional Cancer Center is able to offer access to the latest research studies. The Aspirus Regional Cancer Center typically has 30 to 40 Phase II and Phase III clinical trials available for patient participation. In addition, we are credentialed to deliver Intensity Modulated Radiation Therapy (IMRT) and three-dimensional conformal radiation therapy for National Cancer Institute sponsored clinical trials.

The Aspirus Regional Cancer Center provides access to the most recent advances in radiation therapy including Tomotherapy, IMRT with 3-dimensional ultrasound and infrared camera patient positioning technology, and the latest respiratory gating technology. These advanced technologies assure more accurate dose delivery and minimize damage to surrounding healthy tissue.

The latest forms of systemic therapy are also available at the Aspirus Regional Cancer Center. These include chemotherapy; targeted therapies, which specifically target abnormalities in the cancer cells; immunotherapies, which enhance the body's own immune system to fight off cancer cells; and radioactive immunotherapy such as monoclonal antibodies.

The Aspirus Regional Cancer Center offers you the comfort of knowing you are receiving cancer care from the region's premier cancer treatment and support provider. We go beyond delivering the best cancer care available. We deliver compassion based on an understanding of how cancer affects our patients and their families, working together side-by-side every step of the way.



Q. What is the stature of the hospital affiliated with the cancer center and do they offer specialized cancer care?

Your cancer treatment may require hospitalization. If so, you want to assure you are receiving the best hospital care possible and that it is convenient for you and your family. Check to assure that the hospital has an in-patient unit dedicated to advanced cancer care and rehabilitation. This tells you the hospital has experienced staff that specializes in cancer treatment. The care you receive in the hospital is vital for your recovery.

The Aspirus Regional Cancer Center coordinates cancer services seamlessly with Aspirus Wausau Hospital. Aspirus Wausau Hospital is the region's first Magnet hospital and one of just five percent of U.S. hospitals to receive this distinction. Magnet designation means that nurses, working in collaboration with multi-disciplinary teams, provide patients with a documented higher level of care than they would receive in a non-designated hospital.

- The surgeons at Aspirus Wausau Hospital utilize the most advanced surgical techniques for cancer surgery including minimally invasive surgery, Cryosurgery, daVinci Robotic surgery, and reconstructive surgery.
- Aspirus Wausau Hospital has the area's most comprehensive inpatient oncology care unit staffed with a compassionate team specially trained to meet the unique needs of cancer patients.
- Aspirus Wausau Hospital has been a proven national leader for inpatient rehabilitation, helping patients recover faster and better, allowing them to resume normal life activities.

In 2007, 13,796 patients were admitted to Aspirus Wausau Hospital and 4,789 inpatient surgeries were performed. Independent surveys show that people are extremely pleased with the care they received. In fact, 97.5% of Aspirus Wausau Hospital patients would recommend us to others.

Q. What do patients say about the cancer program?

How a cancer program performs is sometimes best told by the most important source of all—the patient.

The Aspirus Regional Cancer Center is continually reviewing the experiences of our patients so we can identify ways to improve care. This is done through ongoing surveys that help guide improvement efforts. And, the Aspirus Regional Cancer Center is proud to say that patients report we are doing an outstanding job. **The results of the most recent survey indicate that 100% of our patients would recommend the Aspirus Regional Cancer Center to others.**

**Excellence is a choice.
Make Aspirus yours.**



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REGIONAL
CANCER CENTER**

Passion for excellence. Compassion for people.