

# Coming to Terms with Cancer

A Glossary of Cancer-Related Terms

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**A Note to the Reader**

The information contained in this book is not intended as medical advice and should not be relied upon as a substitute for consulting with your physician. This information may not address all possible actions, precautions, side effects, or interactions. All matters regarding your health require the supervision of a physician who is familiar with your medical needs. For more information, contact your American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345 ([www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)).

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**adrenalectomy** Surgical removal of one or both adrenal glands. Removal of one adrenal gland (unilateral) is used to treat a tumor that has started in the gland or, less often, has spread there from a cancer elsewhere in the body.

**adrenaline** This is the potent hormone epinephrine, produced in the inner portion (medulla) of both adrenal glands, whose actions include increased pulse (heart rate) and blood pressure. Epinephrine when mixed with local anesthetic drugs, such as lidocaine, prolongs anesthesia. *See* Epinephrine.

**Rx** **Adriamycin®** *See* Doxorubicin.

**advance directives** Legal documents that tell the physician and family what a person wants for future medical care, including whether to start or when to stop life-sustaining treatment.

**advanced cancer** A general term describing the stages of cancer in which the disease has spread from the primary site to other parts of the body. When the cancer has spread only to the surrounding areas, it is called locally advanced. If it has spread further by traveling through the bloodstream or lymph system, it is called metastatic.

**Rx** **Advil®** *See* Ibuprofen.

**aflatoxin** A carcinogen (cancer-causing substance) from fungi (*Aspergillus*) contaminating grain and peanuts raised in warm, wet climates, and stored in hot, damp surroundings. Aflatoxin, together with viral hepatitis, appears responsible for the large numbers of cases of liver cancer (hepatocellular carcinoma or liver cell cancer) found in Equatorial Africa.

**afterbirth** *See* Placenta.

**afterloading** A type of treatment used in cancer radiation therapy (called brachytherapy) in which the radiation source is placed in tubes or in a device previously positioned in or near a tumor. After the calculated radiation dose is given, the tubes and radioactive sources are usually removed. However, in some types of treatment, such as for prostate cancer, the radioactive seeds may be left permanently in place. The technique is used to treat a variety of malignant tumors that include breast, prostate, and head and neck cancers.

**agent** Any substance or force able to affect the body.

**Rx** **AG3340** Also known by the trade name Prinomastat®, this drug is a matrix metalloproteinase (MMP) inhibitor. MMPs are enzymes that help tumor cells to grow, invade surrounding tissue, and develop blood vessels that help cancer cells to spread to distant tissues. This drug prevents the action of these enzymes so