

FOR YOUR PATIENT

Questions you can ask your oncology care team

You may have many questions about your cancer and treatment. You should feel comfortable talking with your oncology care team and feel free to ask them any question. These questions can help you gather information you need to make decisions about your care. Be sure to ask any other questions you may have.

- **Has my cancer spread beyond the pancreas?**
- **What stage is my cancer and what does that mean?**
- **What are my treatment choices?**
- **Which treatment do you recommend? Why?**
- **What is the goal of your recommended treatment plan?**
- **How much experience do you have with this type of treatment?**
- **What are the risks or side effects of this treatment?**
- **How is this treatment likely to help in my case?**
- **How would treatment affect my daily life?**
- **Is the hospital experienced in treating people with this cancer?**
- **Should I be referred to a cancer center for treatment?**
- **What should I do to prepare for treatment?**
- **Should I consider participating in a clinical trial?**
- **Based on what you know about my case, how long do you think I will survive?**

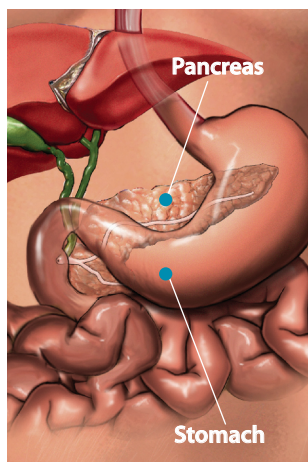
Source: Pancreatic cancer overview. American Cancer Society Web site. <http://www.cancer.org/Cancer/PancreaticCancer/OverviewGuide/index>. Accessed November 22, 2011.

How would I know if I may have pancreatic cancer?

THE NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE estimates that more than 44,000 cases of cancer of the pancreas will be diagnosed in 2011. The disease occurs most often in persons older than 65 years. Risk factors that can increase your chance of developing pancreatic cancer are smoking tobacco, diabetes, having relatives who had the disease, inflammation of the pancreas, and obesity.

The pancreas is an organ located between the stomach and the spine. It is approximately 6 inches long. The pancreas has two functions: its exocrine cells provide pancreatic juices that help digestion, and its endocrine cells produce the hormones insulin and glucagon, which help regulate blood

sugar levels. Most cases of pancreatic cancer occur in the ducts that carry the pancreatic juices to the small intestines.



Symptoms Pancreatic cancer often does not produce symptoms during the early stages of the disease. As the tumor grows, patients may experience some of these common symptoms: dark urine, pale stools, yellow color to the skin and eyes, pain in the upper part of the belly, pain in the middle of the back that does not go away with a change in position, nausea and vomiting, and stools that float. People with advanced pancreatic cancer may experience weakness or a tired feeling, loss of appetite or full feeling, or unexplained weight loss.

Diagnosis A diagnosis is based on results of a combination of blood and other laboratory tests and a physical examination. Imaging studies such as computed tomography (CT), ultrasound, and endoscopic ultrasonography may be used to visualize the pancreas. Endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), positron emission tomography (PET), and needle biopsy are other tests used to make a diagnosis.

Treatment Cancer of the pancreas can be cured only if it is found at an early stage and only if the whole tumor can be surgically removed. Treatment options include surgery, chemotherapy, targeted therapy, and radiation therapy. Location of the tumor in the pancreas, whether the cancer has spread, and the patient's age and general health are factors when determining optimal treatment plans. Most patients receive more than one type of treatment. ■

Source: National Cancer Institute. What you need to know about cancer of the pancreas. Rockville, MD: National Cancer Institute; 2010. NIH Publication No. 10-1560. <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/wyntk/pancreas>. Accessed November 21, 2011.

Resources

CancerCare

www.cancercares.org

CancerCare offers publications about coping with treatment side effects. Connect Education Workshops, individual counseling, and support groups (online, telephone, and face-to-face).

Pancreatic Cancer Alliance

www.pancreaticalliance.org/

The Pancreatic Cancer Alliance's mission is to promote research and education on the disease. Its Web site offers information, advocacy, and resources for patients and their families.

National Cancer Institute

www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/pancreatic

The pancreatic cancer home page is NCI's gateway for information and resources for persons with pancreatic cancer and their friends and families.

American Cancer Society

www.cancer.org/cancer/pancreaticcancer/index

The American Cancer Society section on pancreatic cancer offers both a detailed guide and an overview guide with information on the disease, its treatment, and patient prognosis. The site also provides links and information on clinical trials.

American Society of Clinical Oncology

www.cancer.net/

Cancer.net provides oncologist-approved information on pancreatic cancer and all other forms of cancer and its treatment from the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO).



How to manage eating problems



TREATMENTS for pancreatic cancer, such as surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, and biologic therapy, can cause eating problems. Here are some steps you can take to manage common eating-related effects of cancer treatment.

Appetite loss Drink liquids that add calories and other nutrients such as soup, juice, and milk and soy-based drinks with protein throughout the day, even if you do not feel like eating. Eat five or six small meals instead of three large meals and only sip small amounts of liquid while eating. Keep snacks available for when you feel like eating.

Changes in sense of smell Choose foods that smell and taste good to you, and avoid foods with smells that bother you. Minimize food smells by cooking outdoors, using a kitchen fan, opening lids away from you, and serving foods at room temperature. Plastic utensils may help reduce the metal taste in your mouth.

Changes in sense of taste Enhance taste of foods with sweeteners and herbs and spices. Marinate meats in fruit juices, salad dressing, or packaged marinades. Avoid foods that do not look appealing or taste strange to you.



Diarrhea Drink plenty of fluids to replace fluids lost through diarrhea. Eat small meals throughout the day instead of three large meals. You should eat and drink foods high in sodium and potassium such as bouillon, fat-free broth, and bananas. Low-fiber foods can also help when you have diarrhea.

Nausea Eating smaller amounts of food more often may help keep nausea under control. Eat plain yogurt, white toast, and clear broth, which may be easier on your stomach.

Sore mouth Eat foods that are soft and easy to chew such as scrambled eggs and custards. Cook foods until they are very soft and tender, and cut foods into small pieces. Eat foods that are cool or at room temperature. Avoid salty foods, tomatoes and ketchup, citrus fruits and juices, raw vegetables, and crunchy foods.

Vomiting After the vomiting stops, drink small amounts of clear liquids. Move up to full-liquid foods and drinks when you can tolerate clear liquids without vomiting. Slowly add solid foods as you start feeling better. Eat five or six small meals a day instead of three large ones, and do not eat favorite foods so you do not begin to dislike them. ■

Source: National Cancer Institute. Eating problems and ways to manage them. <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/coping/eatinghints/page4>. Accessed December 2, 2011.