

Patient Information about Pancreatic Cancer

<http://www.oncologychannel.com/patient-information-pancreatic-cancer/index.shtml>

The pancreas is a digestive organ located in the abdomen. Pancreatic cancer is a serious, often aggressive, type of cancer that can be difficult to diagnose. Common symptoms of pancreatic cancer include jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes), abdominal pain or back pain, weight loss, fatigue, loss of appetite, and other symptoms related to insulin levels and blood glucose levels.

Pancreatic cancer treatment depends on the stage of the disease and may include surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, and immunotherapy. In many cases, a combination of these treatment options is used.

Here are some questions to ask your doctor (e.g., oncologist) about pancreatic cancer diagnosis and treatment. **Print this page**, mark the questions that concern you, and bring it with you to your next doctor's appointment. The more information you have about cancer of the pancreas and about available cancer support services, the easier it will be to work with your health care team to develop a pancreatic cancer treatment plan.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor about Pancreatic Cancer

- Why do you suspect that I have cancer of the pancreas?
- What type of pancreatic cancer do you suspect that I have?
- What diagnostic tests do you recommend? What do these tests involve?
- Do you recommend that I have the tumor marker CA 19-9 (cancer antigen) test? Why or why not?
- How should I prepare for these diagnostic tests?
- Might I need a pancreas biopsy?
- If so, what does this test involve?
- Should I call for the test results, or will someone contact me?
Telephone number to call: **Date:**
- Who will explain the results of these tests and/or biopsy to me?
- What is the stage of my pancreatic cancer?

- What is the usual prognosis associated with this cancer type and stage?
- Have cancer cells spread to my lymph nodes or other organs?
- Who are the members of my oncology team? How do I reach my treatment team?
- What kind(s) of treatment do you recommend?
- Why do you think these treatments are best for me?
- What are the benefits, risks, and side effects of these treatments?
- Do you recommend that I get a second or third opinion before starting treatment?
- What can I expect before, during, and after my treatment?
- How can I help myself feel better during treatment?
- Am I a candidate for surgery to remove the tumor? Why or why not?
- If I have surgery, how much of my pancreas might be removed?
- Do you think the Whipple procedure might be necessary? What does this procedure involve?
- Might other organs need to be removed along with the pancreas? If so, which ones? Why?
- How will my body function without these organs?
- How long might I be in the hospital following surgery?
- What can I expect for my recovery?
- How long might the recovery period last? Will I have any restrictions? **Restrictions:**
- What kinds of side effects or complications are associated with this surgery?
- What should I do if I experience severe complications? **Telephone number to call:**

- Might I need alcohol injections or other procedures to treat pain?
- If so, what might these treatments involve?
- Might I develop digestive problems or diabetes as a result of my treatment?
- If so, how will these complications be managed?
- Do you recommend chemotherapy to treat my pancreatic cancer? Why or why not?
- If I have chemotherapy, will it take place at a clinic or at the hospital?
- Will chemotherapy drugs be administered orally or through an IV?
- How will chemotherapy side effects be managed?
- What should I do if I experience severe side effects? **Telephone number to call:**
- Might I need radiation therapy?
- What are the side effects of radiation therapy and how will these effects be managed?
- Do you recommend immunotherapy? Why or why not?
- Is my body's immune system strong enough to fight cancer cells along with immunotherapy drugs?
- How will the side effects of immunotherapy be managed?
- Do you recommend that I participate in a pancreatic cancer clinical trial? Why or why not?
- How can I find a clinical trial for pancreatic cancer patients?
- What do experimental treatments, for example using gene therapy or monoclonal antibodies, involve?
- How can I learn more about pancreatic cancer? Can you recommend any books or online resources?

- Can you recommend a support group for pancreatic cancer patients in my local area?
 - Are there support services available for my family, friends, and caregivers?
 - Can you explain hospice to me?
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Notes/Additional Information