

Liver Cancer



Liver Cancer

Cancer of the liver is an uncontrolled growth of malignant (cancerous) cells in the liver. It may be a primary cancer, resulting from abnormal cells in the liver or bile ducts or it may result from the spread of cancerous cells from another part of the body. About 16,000 new cases will be diagnosed each year. It is called Hepatocellular Carcinoma or Hepatoma.

Facts

- Liver cancer is the uncontrolled growth of cancer cells in the liver.
- The cause of liver cancer is unknown.
- Chronic Hepatitis B and C and Chronic Alcohol Use are the most common causes of liver cancer.
- Many times there are vague symptoms or no symptoms of liver cancer.
- Obesity and Diabetes may increase a person's risk for developing liver cancer in tests.
- Liver cancer can affect people of all ages, but is most common in men of middle age and older.
- Diagnosis of liver cancer can be by physical exam, blood tests or imaging.
- Treatment options depend on a number of variables
- A doctor specializing in liver cancer can assist in recommending treatment.



Mission Statement - The Community Liver Alliance is dedicated to supporting the community through liver disease awareness, prevention, education and research.

For more information please visit our website
www.communityliveralliance.org

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Liver Cancer

**Facts & Information
Preventive Measures
Treatment Options**



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What is your liver and what does it do?

The liver is a large reddish-brown solid organ that is approximately 3 to 4 pounds. Located in the upper part of the abdomen, it is tucked away under the right side of the rib cage. It is one of the largest organs in the body, second only to the skin. It is shaped like a pyramid and is divided into the right and left lobes.

The liver is a unique organ that performs many complex functions in your body every day. It acts as a filter to clean and clear your body of waste, thus helping your body fight infection. The liver is like a big chemical laboratory. It manages the nutrients that have been absorbed by the gut from food, removes toxins from the blood, makes big proteins like albumin and clotting factors (these help our blood clot), and secretes bile which helps digest our food.

What causes liver Cancer?

The cause of liver cancer is unknown. There are several risk factors associated with the development of liver cancer and persons with cirrhosis of any form have an increased risk. Chronic Hepatitis B and C and Alcoholic Cirrhosis of the liver are the most common causes. Obesity and Diabetes may increase the risk of liver cancer.

Signs and Symptoms of liver Cancer...

Signs of liver cancer include weight loss, weakness, fatigue, pain or a mass in the abdomen, an accumulation of fluid in the abdomen (ascites), bloating, jaundice, or fever. Many times, there are no symptoms and liver cancer is found in patients with liver disease by regular screening tests. Liver cancer can affect people of all ages, but is most common in men of middle age and older.

What is the best way to prevent liver cancer?

- Reduce your risk of cirrhosis
- Drink alcohol in moderation or not at all if you have underlying liver disease
- Get vaccinated for Hepatitis A and especially for Hepatitis B
- Follow your doctors recommendations regarding your liver disease, its treatment and be screened regularly for liver cancer
- Avoid risky behaviors, IV drug use, and practice safe sex—take measures to prevent Hepatitis C
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Maintain tight glycemic control if diabetic



How can liver cancer be treated?

Treatment options depend on a number of variables:

- How well is the liver working
- How big is the liver cancer, where it is located and how many lesions there are
- How healthy is the person otherwise
- Has the liver cancer spread anywhere else (metastasized)

A doctor that specializes in liver cancer can determine if a person qualifies for other treatment options. After liver cancer is found and staged, a treatment plan may be decided upon which may include:

Surgery – To remove part of the liver with the cancer is called a partial hepatectomy. If the cancer has not spread and the liver is healthy, surgery to remove the tumor may be an option.

Transplant – For some people a transplant of their liver is the best option. If the liver cancer has not spread from the liver and is small in size

Tumor Ablation – Ablation refers to treatment that destroys the tumor without removing it. There are several ways of doing this, by using radio frequency waves, cryosurgery (freezing the tumor), or ethanol injections to destroy the cancer cells.

Radiation therapy – Uses high energy x-rays to destroy cancer cells or shrink tumors

Chemotherapy – Is the use of drugs to destroy cancer cells. Sometimes chemotherapy can be injected directly into the liver tumor called chemoembolization

Sorafenib – An oral chemotherapy medication used to treat primary liver cancer (hepatocellular carcinoma)

Clinical Trials – Carefully controlled research studies that are done with patients who volunteer for them. They are done to help physicians develop promising new treatments and procedures.