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If You Have Stomach Cancer

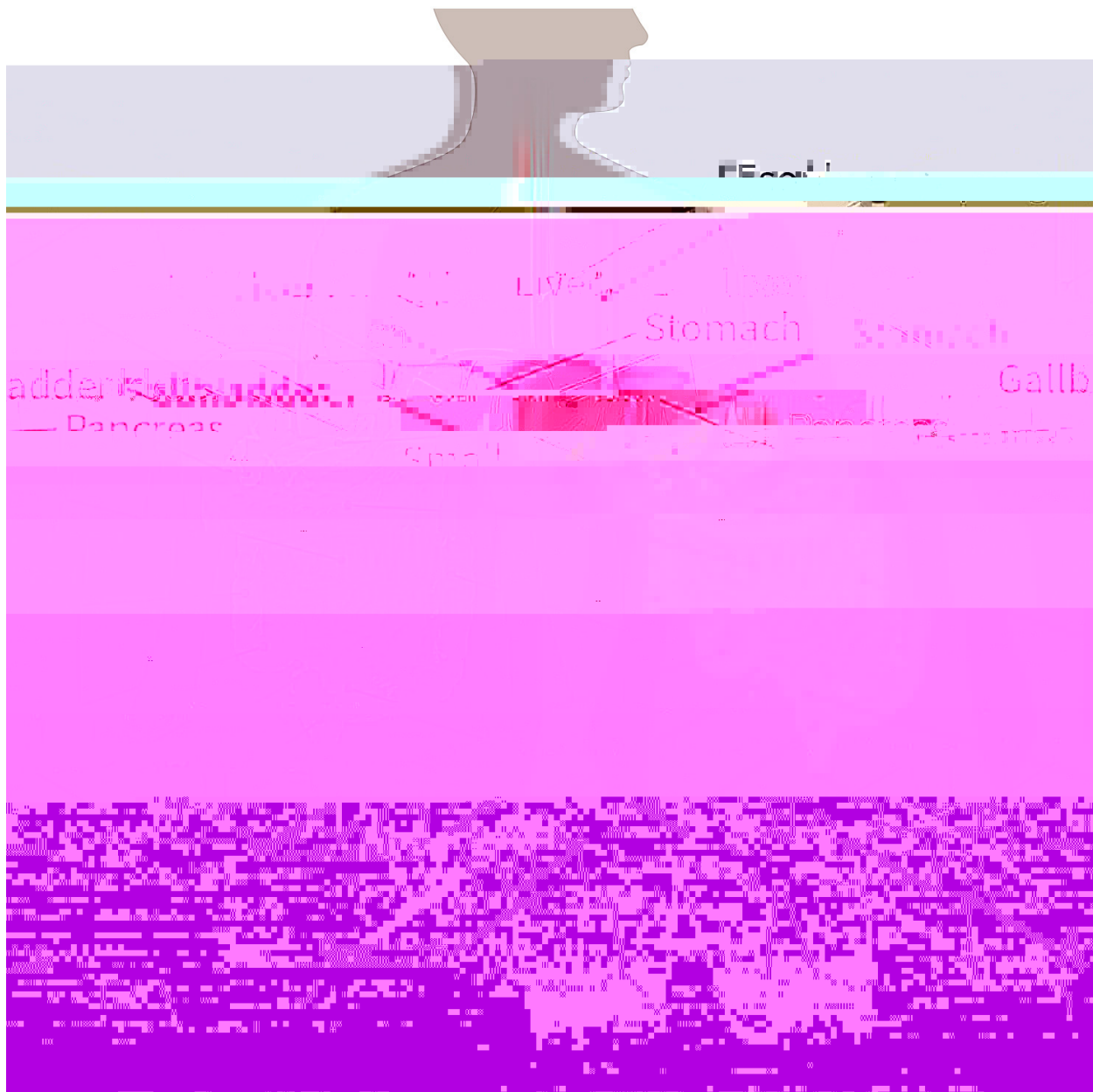
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What is stomach cancer?

[Cancer](#)¹ can start any place in the body. Stomach cancer (also called **gastric cancer**) starts in the stomach. It starts when cells in the stomach grow out of control and crowd out normal cells. This makes it hard for the body to work the way it should.

Cancer cells can spread to other parts of the body. For example, cancer cells in the stomach can sometimes travel to the liver and grow there. When cancer cells do this, it's called **metastasis**. To doctors, the cancer cells in the new place look just like the ones from the stomach.

Cancer is always named based on the place where it starts. So when stomach cancer spreads to the liver (or any other part of the body), it's still called stomach cancer. It's not called liver cancer unless it starts from cells in the liver.



The stomach

Ask your doctor to show you where your cancer is.

Types of stomach cancer

There are many [types of stomach cancer](#)². Some are very rare. Most stomach cancers are adenocarcinomas. These cancers start from gland cells that line the inside of the

tube and checked for cancer cells.

Endoscopic ultrasound (EUS): This test can be done during an upper endoscopy. A

- Where will they be done?
- Who can explain them to me?
- How and when will I get the results?
- Who will explain the results to me?
- What do I need to do next?

How serious is my cancer?

If you have stomach cancer, the doctor will want to find out how far it has spread to help decide what type of treatment is best for you. This is called the [stage](#)⁵ of the cancer. The tests above are used to help stage the cancer.

The stage describes the growth or spread of the cancer in the stomach or into nearby areas. It also tells if the cancer has spread to other parts of the body that are farther away.

Your cancer can be stage 1, 2, 3, or 4. The lower the number, the less the cancer has spread. A higher number means the cancer has spread more. Be sure to ask the doctor about the cancer stage and what it means for you.

Questions to ask the doctor

- Do you know the stage of the cancer?
- If not, how and when will you find out the stage?
- Would you explain what the stage means in my case?
- How might the stage of the cancer affect my treatment?
- What will happen next?

What kind of treatment will I need?

There are many [ways to treat stomach cancer](#)⁶, but the main types of treatment are:

- Surgery
- Chemotherapy (chemo)
- Radiation treatments
- Targeted drugs
- Immunotherapy

Often more than one treatment is used.

The treatment plan that's best for you will depend on:

- Where the cancer is in the stomach
- If the cancer has spread outside the stomach
- The chance that a type of treatment will cure the cancer or help in some way
- Your age and overall health
- Your feelings about the treatment and the side effects that come with it

Surgery for stomach cancer

Surgery is often part of the treatment for stomach cancer if it can be done. There are different kinds of surgery. The type that's best for you depends on how big the cancer is and where it is in the stomach. Surgery might be done for different reasons. If the cancer is small enough, it might be done to try to remove all of it. If the cancer can't be removed, surgery might be done to help prevent or relieve symptoms. Ask your doctor what kind of surgery you will have and what to expect.

Side effects of surgery

Any type of surgery can have risks and side effects, such as bleeding or infections. If part or all of your stomach is removed, it can affect the way you eat. Be sure to ask the doctor what you can expect. If you have problems, let your doctors know. Doctors who treat people with stomach cancer should be able to help you with any problems that come up.

Chemo

Chemo is the short word for chemotherapy – the use of drugs to fight cancer. The drugs may be given into a vein or taken as pills. These drugs go into the blood and spread through the body. Chemo is given in cycles or rounds. Each round of treatment is followed by a break. Most of the time, 2 or more chemo drugs are given. Treatment often lasts for many months. Chemo can be given before or after surgery. It can also be given together with radiation. Ask your doctor what to expect.

Side effects of chemo

Chemo can make you feel very tired or sick to your stomach. You might have diarrhea or mouth sores, and your hair might fall out. But these problems often go away after treatment ends.

There are ways to treat most chemo side effects. If you have side effects, be sure to talk to your cancer care team so they can help.

Radiation treatments

Radiation uses high-energy rays (like x-rays) to kill cancer cells. It is aimed at the cancer from a machine outside the body. Radiation might be used along with chemo (before or after surgery), or it might be used by itself.

Side effects of radiation treatments

Side effects depend on where the radiation is aimed. The most common side effects of radiation are:

- Skin changes where the radiation is given
- Feeling very tired
- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhea

Most side effects get better after treatment ends. Some might last longer. Talk to your cancer care team about what you can expect.

Targeted drugs

Targeted drugs are newer treatments that may be used for some types of stomach cancer. These drugs affect mainly cancer cells and not normal cells in the body. They may work even if other treatments don't. These drugs have different side effects from chemo, so talk to your cancer care team about what to expect.

Immunotherapy

Immunotherapy is treatment that boosts the body's immune system to help fight the cancer. The type of immunotherapy used to treat stomach cancer is given into a vein

they are safe?

- How soon do I need to start treatment?
- What should I do to be ready for treatment?
- Is there anything I can do to help the treatment work better?
- What's the next step?

[diagnosed.html](#)
