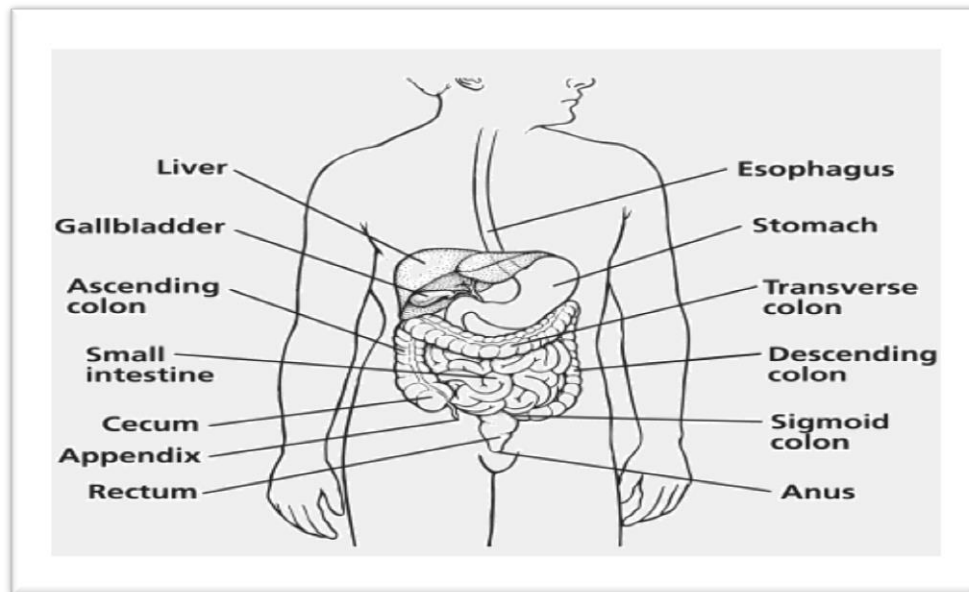


## Cancer of the stomach

Stomach cancer begins when cancer cells form in the inner lining of your stomach. These cells can grow into a tumor. Also called gastric cancer, the disease usually grows slowly over many years. The stomach lies along the upper digestive tract between the esophagus and the small intestine. It is normally found in the upper left portion of the abdominal cavity. **The stomach serves as a reservoir for food eaten during meals and begins the process of digestion.** Its inner lining contains glands that secrete acid and digestive enzymes.

Some people use the word *stomach* to refer to the area of the body between the chest and the pelvic area. The medical term for this area is the *abdomen*.



## Risk factors for stomach cancers

- ✓ **Chronic infection with *Helicobacter pylori***, a common cause of chronic gastritis and peptic ulcer disease
- ✓ **Certain medical conditions** - including esophagitis, GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease), Barrett's esophagus, stomach polyps (growth in the stomach)
- ✓ **Age** - the risk of developing stomach cancer increases significantly after the age of 55
- ✓ **Sex** - men have twice the risk of developing stomach cancer compared with women
- ✓ **Family history**
- ✓ **Previous or existing cancers**
- ✓ **Smoking** - long-term smokers have twice the risk of developing stomach cancer compared to non-smokers
- ✓ **Being overweight or obese**
- ✓ **Stomach surgery for an ulcer**
- ✓ **Type-A blood** and a certain type of chronic anemia
- ✓ **Working in coal, metal, timber, or rubber industries and exposure to asbestos**
- ✓ A **diet** high in smoked, pickled vegetables, or rich in salted or smoked fish or meats (tinned foods), salty food, and low or deficient in fresh fruits and vegetables and eating poorly preserved foods.

## **What are the signs and symptoms of stomach cancer?**

Early on signs and symptoms of stomach cancers are not really clear, it is for this reason that so many patients are not diagnosed until the disease is already well advanced:

- ✓ Indigestion and feeling bloated after you eat a meal
- ✓ Feeling of fullness after taking only a small amount of food
- ✓ Heartburn
- ✓ Nausea and loss of appetite

**As stomach tumors grow, you may have more serious signs and symptoms, such as:**

- ✓ Stomach or abdominal pain usually above the navel and / or swelling in your stomach
- ✓ Blood in your stool, constipation and/or diarrhea
- ✓ Severe nausea and vomiting
- ✓ Weight loss without trying
- ✓ Trouble swallowing
- ✓ Yellowish eyes or skin
- ✓ Weakness or feeling tired
- ✓ Iron deficiency anemia

## **Can stomach cancers be prevented?**

You can reduce the risk of developing the disease by:

### **1. Eating a healthy diet and properly storing food:**

- ✓ Fruit and vegetables - people who eat plenty of fruit and vegetables are usually less likely to develop stomach cancer, compared with those who don't especially citrus fruits (oranges) and foods rich in vitamin A (carrots) and E (onions, garlic, tumeric, broccoli, sweet potatoes, berry family, apples, cherries, red grapes, spinach)
- ✓ Reduce your intake of refined foods eat more whole grains
- ✓ Eat less salty and smoked foods e.g. dried salt dried fish, potato chips, cheese, salty canned products, and the salt shaker. Avoid processed meat such as sausage, bacon, ham, bologna, and hot dogs
- ✓ Properly food storage e.g. nuts, whole grains

### **2. Quitting smoking and avoiding passive smoking**

### **3. Be physically active and maintain a healthy weight**

### **4. Wear protective clothing.**

### **5. Early treatment of infections such H pylori**

### **6. Check with a doctor - individuals at high risk might consider having periodic screening**

## **How Is Stomach Cancer Diagnosed?**

There are many tests which can be done to investigate if it's stomach cancer which include:

### **1. Medical history and physical exam**

- 2. Upper endoscopy:** Also called *esophagogastroduodenoscopy* or *EGD*) is the main test used to find stomach cancer. The doctor passes an endoscope, which is a thin, flexible, lighted tube with a small video camera on

the end, down your throat. This lets the doctor see the lining of your esophagus, stomach, and first part of the small intestine. If abnormal areas are seen, biopsies (tissue samples) can be taken using instruments passed through the endoscope and sent to the lab.

3. **Endoscopic ultrasound:** In endoscopic ultrasound (EUS), a small transducer is placed on the tip of an endoscope.
4. **Biopsy:** During a biopsy, the doctor removes a sample of the abnormal area. Samples are sent to a lab to be looked at under a microscope.
5. **Imaging tests:** Imaging tests use x-rays, magnetic fields, sound waves, or radioactive substances to create pictures of the inside of your body.
6. **Upper gastrointestinal (GI) series:** This is an x-ray test to look at the inner lining of the esophagus, stomach, and first part of the small intestine.
7. **Computed tomography (CT or CAT) scan:** The CT scan is an x-ray test that produces detailed cross-sectional images of your body.
8. **CT-guided needle biopsy:** CT scans can also be used to guide a biopsy needle into a suspected area of cancer spread.
9. **Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan:** MRI scans use radio waves and strong magnets instead of x-rays.
10. **Positron emission tomography (PET) scan:** In this test, radioactive substance (usually a type of sugar related to glucose, known as FDG) is injected into a vein. (radioactivity used is very low and will pass out of the body over the next day or so.) Because cancer cells are growing faster than normal cells, they use sugar much faster, so they take up the radioactive material.
11. **Chest x-ray:** This test can help find out if the cancer has spread to the lungs. It might also determine if there are any serious lung or heart diseases present.

### **Treatment for stomach cancer**

- ✓ Treatment for stomach cancer depends on several factors, including the severity of the cancer and the patient's overall health and preferences.
- ✓ Treatments may include surgery, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, medications, and taking part in clinical trials.

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