

Pancreas Cancer

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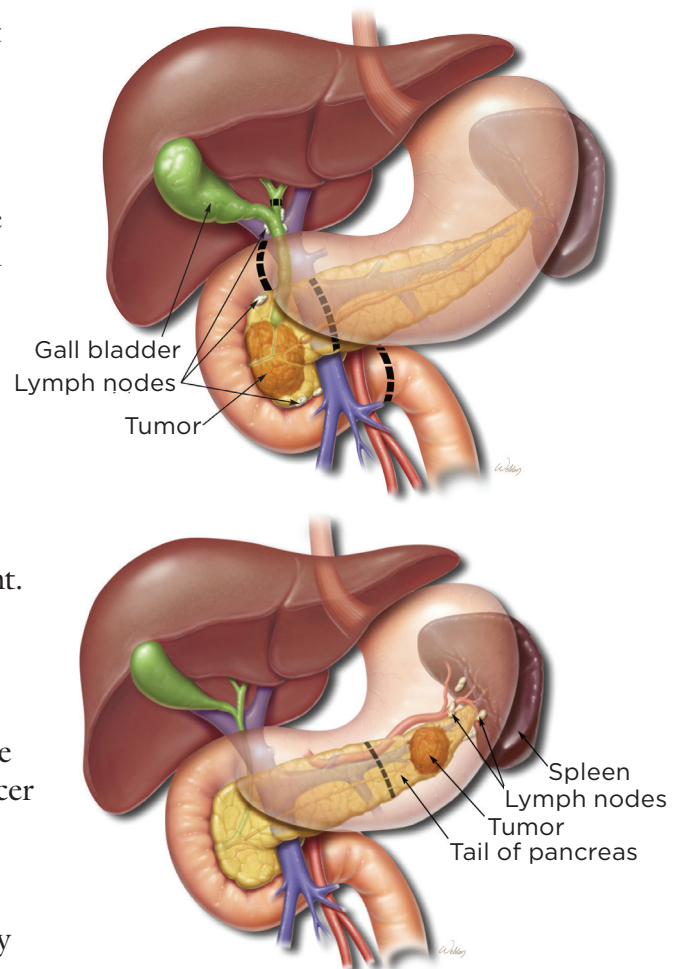
Pancreas cancer, also known as pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma, is an aggressive form of cancer. Most patients who have this cancer have abdominal pain, fatigue, loss of appetite and weight loss. When the tumor is located in the head of the pancreas, patients usually have jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes). Risk factors for pancreas cancer include being over age 65, smoking, a family history, chronic pancreatitis and diabetes. A new diagnosis of diabetes can often occur within a year of the diagnosis of pancreas cancer.

Unfortunately, in many cases, pancreatic cancer is diagnosed in an advanced stage where surgery is not possible. Only about 15% of patients have a tumor that is diagnosed early enough for surgery to be effective. Treatment options depend on the stage of disease, the location of the tumor and the overall health of the patient.

Typically, chemotherapy is the first treatment. Chemotherapy is medicine that goes throughout the entire body and treats both the pancreas tumor and small pieces of the tumor (cells) that break off from the tumor and travel in the blood stream. These stray cancer cells can go to other organs like the liver or lungs and start growing there. Surgery, which does not address these circulating tumor cells, requires planning and time for recovery after surgery and can result in a delay in chemotherapy which would allow these cells to grow for months before being addressed.

After three to six months of chemotherapy treatment, CT scans are repeated and surgery is considered. Sometimes radiation therapy is also used to further shrink the tumor prior to surgery, particularly if the tumor is close to major blood vessels around the pancreas.

Pancreas cancer treatment is complex, and it is very important to receive care from an experienced multidisciplinary team. We know that this diagnosis is very stressful for you and your family, and our experts will tailor a care plan specifically for you.



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