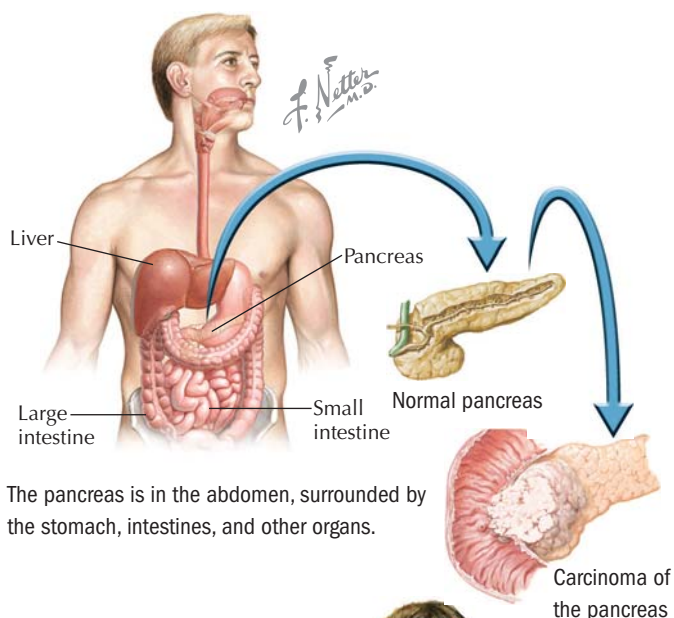
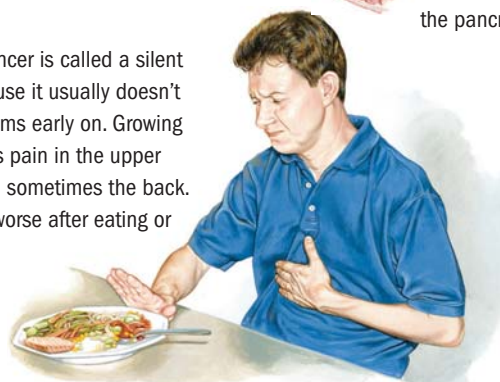


MANAGING YOUR PANCREATIC CANCER



The pancreas is in the abdomen, surrounded by the stomach, intestines, and other organs.

Pancreatic cancer is called a silent disease because it usually doesn't cause symptoms early on. Growing cancer causes pain in the upper abdomen and sometimes the back. Pain can get worse after eating or lying down.



If cancer blocks the bile duct so that bile cannot pass into the intestines, the skin and whites of the eyes may become yellow. This condition is called jaundice.

Your doctor makes a preliminary diagnosis from symptoms and imaging tests (CT, MRI, ultrasound, ERCP). The best way to diagnose cancer is with a biopsy. A piece of pancreas is removed and checked with a microscope to detect any cancer cells.



What Is Pancreatic Cancer?

Cancer of the pancreas refers to growth of cancer cells in the pancreas. The pancreas is in the abdomen (belly), with the stomach, intestines, and other organs around it. It makes juices used in digestion and several hormones, including insulin, which controls blood sugar (glucose) level. It releases these substances into ducts (tubes). Pancreatic cancer starts from cells lining these ducts.

Almost 30,000 people in the United States are diagnosed with this cancer each year. Early detection is best for a cure, but this cancer is hard to find early because most symptoms do not occur until the cancer has spread.

What Causes Pancreatic Cancer?

Causes are unclear, but smoking, alcoholism, and chronic inflammation (swelling) of the pancreas (pancreatitis) are related to this disease. Pancreatic cancer isn't contagious or hereditary.

What Are the Symptoms of Pancreatic Cancer?

Because pancreatic cancer doesn't cause symptoms early, it's called silent. Symptoms depend on the cancer's location and size. If the bile duct is blocked so that bile cannot pass into the intestines, jaundice may occur. The skin and whites of the eyes become yellow and urine may become dark.

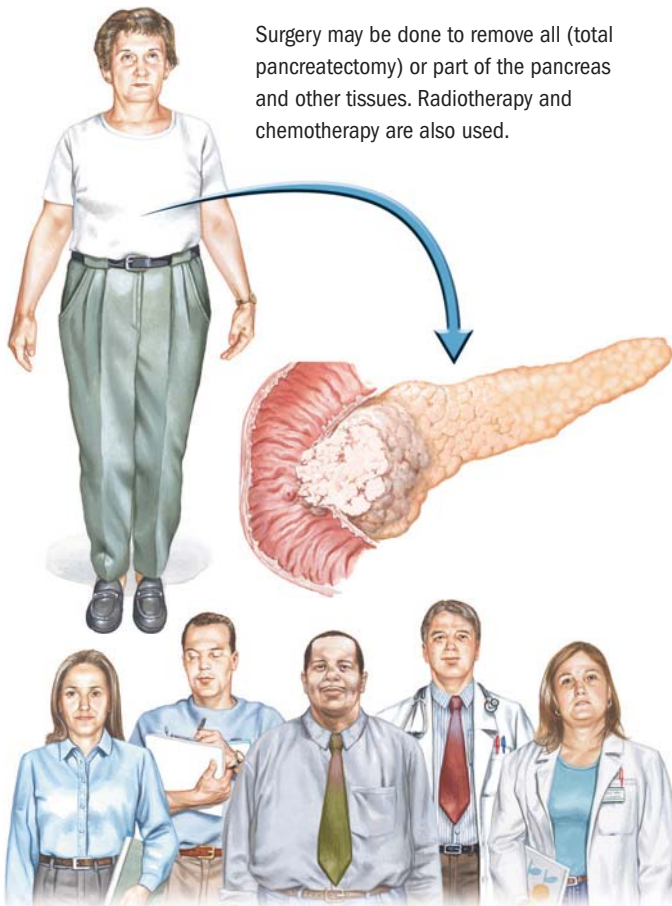
Growing cancer causes pain in the upper abdomen and sometimes the back. Pain becomes worse after eating or lying down. Other symptoms are nausea, reduced appetite, weight loss, and weakness.

How Is Pancreatic Cancer Diagnosed?

The doctor makes a preliminary diagnosis from symptoms and special imaging tests called computed tomography (CT), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), and ultrasound. They help decide the stage (extent) of disease by showing whether cancer affects other organs.

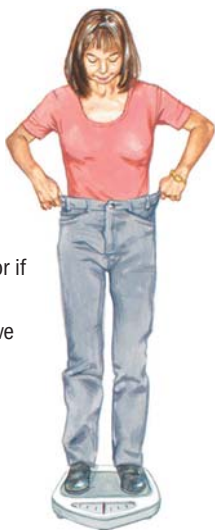
The doctor may also order a test called endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP). This test uses dye and a flexible tube passed down the throat and into the intestine to get x-rays. The best way to diagnose cancer is with a biopsy. A piece of pancreas is taken and checked with a microscope to detect cancer cells.

MANAGING YOUR PANCREATIC CANCER



Surgery may be done to remove all (total pancreatectomy) or part of the pancreas and other tissues. Radiotherapy and chemotherapy are also used.

Understand that diagnosis and treatment of pancreatic cancer will need a team of doctors and health care workers.



Call your doctor if you are losing weight and have no appetite.

How Is Pancreatic Cancer Treated?

Surgery may be done to remove all (total pancreatectomy) or part of the pancreas and other tissues. In the Whipple procedure, the surgeon removes the head of the pancreas, parts of the small intestine and stomach, and other tissues. Sometimes cancer cannot be completely removed, but surgery can help relieve symptoms.

Radiotherapy and chemotherapy are also used. Radiotherapy uses high-energy rays to kill cancer cells. Chemotherapy (drugs to kill cancer cells) may be given alone or with radiotherapy if cancer cannot be removed. Doctors sometimes give chemotherapy after surgery to control cancer cell growth.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Pancreatic Cancer:

- ✓ **DO** understand that you'll need a team of doctors for care. The team will include a primary care doctor, surgeon, oncologist (a doctor specializing in cancer), and maybe a radiation oncologist (a doctor specializing in using radiotherapy for cancer).
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you have jaundice, abdominal pain, weight loss, or no appetite.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you have fever or see drainage from the incision site after surgery.
- ⊗ **DON'T** forget that treatments have side effects, such as pain and infection (surgery) and nausea, vomiting, and hair loss (chemotherapy).
- ⊗ **DON'T** be afraid to ask for a second opinion.

FROM THE DESK OF

NOTES

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following sources:

- National Cancer Institute
Phone: (800) 4-CANCER (422-6237)
Website: <http://www.cancer.gov>
- American Cancer Society
Tel: (800) ACS-2345 (227-2345)
Website: <http://www.cancer.org>