

Treating stomach cancer

February 7 2024, by Joel Streed



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

More than 26,000 people in the U.S. will be diagnosed with stomach cancer this year, and nearly 11,000 people will die of the disease, according to the American Cancer Society. Stomach cancer accounts for about 1.5% of all new cancers diagnosed in the U.S. each year.

Stomach cancer, also known as gastric cancer, can affect any part of the stomach. In most of the world, stomach cancers form in the main part of the stomach. In the U.S., stomach cancer is more likely to affect the area where the esophagus meets the stomach. Where the cancer occurs in the stomach is one factor health care professionals consider when determining [treatment options](#).

Signs and symptoms of stomach cancer can include:

- Trouble swallowing.
- Belly pain.
- Feeling bloated after eating.
- Feeling full after eating small amounts of food.
- Not feeling hungry when you would expect to be hungry.
- Heartburn.
- Indigestion.
- Nausea.
- Vomiting.
- Unintentional weight loss.
- Fatigue.
- Black stools.

Treatment

If you've been diagnosed with stomach cancer, your health care professional will consider the stage and location of your cancer, as well

as your overall health and personal preferences, to determine your treatment plan.

Treatment can include:

- **Surgery.** The goal of [surgery](#) for stomach cancer is to remove all of the cancer. For small stomach cancers, surgery might be the first treatment. Other treatments might be used first if the stomach cancer grows deeper into the stomach wall or spreads to the lymph nodes.
- **Chemotherapy.** Chemotherapy is a [drug treatment](#) that uses chemicals to kill cancer cells. Chemotherapy often is used before surgery to treat stage 2 and stage 3 stomach cancers. Systemic [chemotherapy](#) can shrink the cancer so that it's easier to remove. Systemic chemotherapy may be used after surgery if there's a risk that some cancer cells were left behind. If surgery isn't an option, systemic chemotherapy may be recommended instead. It can be used if the cancer is too advanced or if you're not healthy enough to have surgery. Chemotherapy also can help control cancer symptoms.
- **Radiation therapy.** Radiation therapy uses high-powered beams of energy to kill cancer cells. The beams can come from X-rays, protons or other sources. Radiation sometimes is used before surgery to treat stage 2 and stage 3 stomach cancers. It can shrink the cancer so that it's easier to remove. Radiation therapy may be used after surgery if the cancer can't be removed completely. Radiation can help relieve stomach cancer symptoms if the cancer is advanced or surgery isn't possible.
- **Targeted therapy.** Targeted treatments use medicines that attack specific chemicals present within cancer cells. By blocking these chemicals, targeted treatments can cause cancer cells to die. Your cancer cells are tested to see if targeted therapy is likely to work for you. Targeted therapy typically is used for advanced stomach

cancer. This may include stage 4 stomach cancer and cancer that comes back after treatment.

- Immunotherapy. Immunotherapy is a treatment with medicine that helps your body's immune system kill cancer cells. Your immune system fights off diseases by attacking germs and other cells that shouldn't be in your body. Cancer cells survive by hiding from the immune system. Immunotherapy helps the [immune system](#) cells find and kill the cancer cells.

Immunotherapy sometimes is used to treat advanced cancer. This may include stage 4 [stomach cancer](#) or cancer that comes back after treatment.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

Citation: Treating stomach cancer (2024, February 7) retrieved 29 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-02-stomach-cancer.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.