

What You Need to Know About... Pancreatic Cancer



Pancreatic cancer is often difficult to diagnose. It rarely shows signs or symptoms in its early stages, therefore most patients are diagnosed at an advanced stage. As a result, pancreatic cancer survival rates are much lower than other cancers.

Pancreatic cancer accounts for about

3%

of all diagnosed cancers



and about

7%

of all cancer deaths in the U.S.

Symptoms:



Stomach and back pain



Gastrointestinal problems
Nausea and lack of appetite



Weight loss
Unexplained or excessive



Jaundice



Fatigue



Diabetes

Risk Factors:



Tobacco use: Using tobacco products is one of the most important risk factors – about 25% of pancreatic cancers are thought to be caused by cigarette smoking.¹



Family History: About 10% of pancreatic cancers are caused by inherited gene mutations.



Age: Most cases of pancreatic cancer develop between the ages of 60 and 80.



Sex: More common in men.



Industrial chemical exposure: Excessive exposure to dry cleaning and metalworking chemicals may increase risk.



Diabetes: Higher risk in people with type 2 diabetes.



Race: African Americans have higher incidences than in any other racial group in the United States.²



Chronic pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas): Excessive alcohol use can lead to chronic pancreatitis.

Screening:

For individuals who aren't at an increased risk of developing pancreatic cancer, there is currently no recommended screening routine like there is for breast and colon cancers.

Screening for those at High Risk for Pancreatic Cancer:

Clinical trials may be available to screen and follow individuals with a strong family history. Certain mutations can increase risk, such as the BRCA2 gene, Lynch syndrome and familial pancreatitis. Additionally, individuals with a benign tumor or IPMN cyst (Intraductal Papillary Mucinous Neoplasm) have a higher risk of developing pancreatic cancer.

There's no known method of preventing pancreatic cancer, and many risk factors can't be controlled. Know your risk of cancer and if you have persistent, unexplained symptoms, talk to your health care provider to get an evaluation.

Sources: ¹<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/pancreatic-cancer/causes-risks-prevention/risk-factors.html> ²<https://pathology.jhu.edu/pancreas/familial/about/african-americans>