

Liver Cancer

What is Liver Cancer?

Liver cancer is the growth and spread of unhealthy cells in the liver. Cancer that starts in the liver is called primary liver cancer, or hepatocellular carcinoma. Cancer that starts somewhere else in the body and spreads to the liver is called secondary liver cancer.

Causes of Primary Liver Cancer

There are many causes of primary liver cancer. Anyone with cirrhosis is at risk for primary liver cancer. People with long-term hepatitis B but who do not have cirrhosis are at risk. Conditions such as NASH (Nonalcoholic Steatohepatitis), cirrhosis due to excess alcohol consumption, certain metabolic diseases, and exposure to certain toxins may lead to primary liver cancer.

Symptoms of Liver Cancer

Symptoms of liver cancer include fatigue, pain in the upper right side of the abdomen or in the back and shoulder, feeling bloated or full, loss of appetite and/or weight, jaundice (yellowing of eyes and skin), and dark urine.

Diagnosis of Liver Cancer

Doctors diagnose liver cancer through a physical exam, blood tests, scans (ultrasound, CT or MRI), and possibly liver biopsy. Sometimes doctors will order genetic testing to help better understand the type of cancer present and to decide what treatments may be appropriate.

Treatment of Liver Cancer

Treatment of liver cancer depends on a variety of factors. One important factor is whether the cancer has remained in the liver or if it has spread to other parts of the body. In addition, doctors must determine if there is one tumor or several tumors.

Depending on the above factors, treatment can include chemotherapy, radiation, immunotherapy, or surgery to remove the tumor and/or part of the liver. Another treatment may be radiofrequency ablation, in which a thin probe heats the tumor to destroy cancer cells. Speak to your doctor to find out which treatment(s) may be best for you.

To learn more about liver cancer simply scan this QR code or view all of our free resources available in our Resource Center: liverfoundation.org/resource-center.

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For questions about liver wellness and disease, or for emotional support to patients at the point of crisis and information on local resources including physician referrals, please contact our Helpline at 1-800-465-4837.



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