

Are You Coping Emotionally?

This is an incredibly difficult time for you and your family. If you are having trouble coping, your doctor can refer you to a psychologist or social worker specifically trained to deal with cancer patients. Many people find this extremely helpful. You will also require a referral in order to arrange home care, if you need it.

High-Volume Surgical Centres

If you are eligible for surgery, you should have it done at a centre that does a lot of these complicated procedures. Some provinces have designated these centres as the places that should be performing pancreatic surgery, some have not. In Ontario, Cancer Care Ontario has given the designation to a limited number of hospitals that perform at least 20 pancreatic procedures a year, and have at least two surgeons qualified to do them. Other provinces use different criteria.



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This is a listing of the officially designated centres in Quebec and Ontario, along with the names of hospitals across the country that handle at least 15 cases a year. This is not intended as a recommendation, merely as a rough guide for patients.

Alberta

The University of Alberta Hospital
Edmonton, AB

The Tom Baker Cancer Centre
Calgary, AB

British Columbia

Vancouver General Hospital
Vancouver, BC

Kelowna General Hospital
Kelowna, BC

Victoria General Hospital
Victoria, BC

Royal Columbian Hospital,
New Westminster, BC

Quebec

**CHOM
Centre hospitalier de
l'Université de Montréal**
Montreal, QC

**McGill University Hospital
Centre (MUHC)**
(Affiliated with Montreal
General Hospital and Royal
Victoria Hospital)
Montreal, QC

Jewish General Hospital
(sometimes affiliates with
McGill)
Montreal, QC

**CHEQ
Centre hospitalier de
Québec**
Quebec City, QC

Manitoba

Cancer Care Manitoba
(this is a hospital as well as
an agency)
Winnipeg, MN

Saskatchewan

Regina General Hospital
Regina, SK

Royal University Hospital
Saskatoon, SK

Atlantic Provinces

Victoria General Hospital
Halifax, N.S.

St. John Regional Hospital
St. John, NB

Ontario

University Health Network
Toronto, ON

**Sunnybrook Health Sciences
Centre**
Toronto, ON

**London Health Sciences
Centre**
London, ON

The Ottawa Hospital
Ottawa, ON

**Hamilton Health Sciences
Corporation**
Hamilton, ON

St. Joseph's Health Centre
Toronto, ON

Grand River Hospital
Kitchener-Waterloo, ON

Kingston General Hospital
Kingston, ON

Trillium Health Centre
Mississauga, ON

The information provided here by the National Pancreatic Cancer Canada Foundation is not intended to be a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. If you suspect pancreatic cancer, please see a doctor immediately. National Pancreatic Cancer Canada Foundation does not endorse any specific hospital, physician, product or treatment even though they may be mentioned.
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You've Just Been Diagnosed with Pancreatic Cancer

What's Next?

NATIONAL
PANCREATIC CANCER *Canada*
FOUNDATION

www.pancreaticcancercanada.ca

You are not alone...

Every year, about 4000 Canadians are diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. It's a terrible shock. But there is hope and there is help. Pancreatic Cancer Canada is here to support you and your family, to help you ask the right questions and to better understand your disease so you can get the best possible treatment.

Your Treatment Plan

It is important for people diagnosed with pancreatic cancer to seek treatment from hospitals and doctors that provide the best quality care. You will get the best care from hospitals or doctors that see large numbers of patients with pancreatic cancer. With more experience, hospitals and doctors may have greater knowledge of the disease and treatment options. This is especially true when it comes to surgery.

You may see different specialists after your diagnosis of pancreatic cancer. A gastroenterologist would assist by inserting a plastic or metal stent if you become jaundiced (turn yellow) from the tumour blocking drainage from the liver. A surgical oncologist would assess whether you are a candidate for a removal of the tumour. The medical oncologist uses chemotherapy and other drugs to treat your cancer and its associated symptoms. If you receive radiation, you'll see a radiation oncologist. You will probably need further tests before your team can put a treatment plan in place. If you are suffering symptoms like jaundice or pancreatitis, your team may want to treat these conditions before treating the cancer.

At first, there is a huge amount of complicated medical information to take in. Your hospital should have literature explaining pancreatic cancer, as well as what the pancreas does and where it is. Make sure the sources you check on the Internet are reliable. We suggest sites like www.pancreaticcancercanada.ca; www.pancan.org; www.lustgarten.org. You can also set up a Google Alert for pancreatic cancer to learn about new developments.

Try to have someone with you at your appointments and to take notes. Ask if there is a nurse or someone you can call with questions between appointments. You will feel better once your plan is in place.

What Type of Pancreatic Cancer Do You Have?

There are two different types of pancreatic cancer: 95% of cases are exocrine tumours that begin in the cells that produce enzymes to aid digestion. The vast majority of these are tumours at the head of the pancreas called adenocarcinomas. The rest are classified as neuroendocrine tumours, and originate in the cells that produce hormones. This form of pancreatic cancer is usually easier to treat.

Is Your Cancer Operable?

This is the key question. Although there are different types of pancreatic cancers, and they are diagnosed at different stages, some doctors simply categorize them according to whether or not they are operable or resectable, in medical parlance. Right now, surgery is considered the only possible cure for pancreatic cancer. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of patients are diagnosed early enough to receive surgery. You will be eligible for surgery if your tumour is localized and has not spread to other parts of the body or to critical veins and arteries near the pancreas.

Types of Surgery

There are three types of surgery for early-stage pancreatic cancer; the most common is The Whipple, which involves removing the head of the pancreas, part of the stomach, the gall bladder, some of the small intestine, and some lymph nodes. The surgeon then reconnects the remaining pancreas and digestive organs.

A distal pancreatectomy is performed if the tumour is located in the body or tail of the pancreas. Sometimes the spleen is also removed.

A total pancreatectomy is performed if the tumour is situated in such a way that requires the removal of the

entire pancreas, and sometimes the spleen. In this case, the patient will be diabetic after surgery. That may or may not happen after the other procedures.

Surgeons may consider palliative surgery to alleviate symptoms and make the patient more comfortable when the tumour cannot be removed. They may use biliary bypass surgery to re-route the flow of bile and relieve jaundice or insert a plastic stent to relieve blockages and keep the ducts open.

Locally Advanced Pancreatic Cancer

If the tumour has wrapped itself around critical veins and arteries, the cancer is considered locally advanced and it would be unsafe to attempt surgery in most cases. Ask your doctor if it is appropriate to try chemotherapy or radiation or a combination of both to try to shrink the tumour. In some cases, surgeons will attempt to bypass or graft veins in order to remove the tumour. This makes the procedure much riskier and more difficult. That part of the operation would be performed by a vascular surgeon. Ask if you are eligible for this.

Has Your Cancer Spread?

If your cancer has spread to other organs, surgery may not be an option. However, there are other treatments to help you alleviate symptoms and stabilize the disease. This will normally involve some combination of chemotherapy and radiation.

Clinical Trials

Some patients with pancreatic cancer want to try as many options for treatment as they can. You may want to ask your doctor if you are eligible for any clinical trials. Doctors are always looking for more effective drugs and drug combinations. Participating in a drug trial may be a good option in your case. It will also help others.

Is Your Pain under Control?

It can be difficult to control both the pain and the side-effects of pain medications. Constipation can be a challenging problem. There are doctors who specialize in controlling pain – do not be afraid of their designation: palliative care. They are an important part of the care that can be offered to you at the hospital, in your community and at home. .