

The Stomach

Questions and Answers

FACTS ON STOMACH CANCER

The National Cancer Institute estimates that each year approximately 24,000 people in the United States are diagnosed with stomach cancer. Also known as "gastric cancer," stomach cancer can develop in any part of the stomach and may spread to other organs. Carcinoma of the stomach is the second most-common gastrointestinal cancer in the United States. Although its incidence has declined in recent years, gastric carcinoma remains a significant threat – responsible for over 13,000 deaths annually.

Q: What is the stomach?

A: Located in the upper abdomen, the stomach is part of the digestive system. Food enters the stomach from the esophagus, and juices produced by glands in the stomach lining assist in the digestive process. After several hours, the food becomes liquid and moves into the small intestine, continuing the digestive process.

This information is not intended to provide specific medical or professional advice. Your physician should provide definitive medical advice, as well as answers to your medical-related questions.

RESOURCE SUPPORT

For additional information about stomach cancer, the following resources are available:

National Cancer Institute Cancer Information Service

800/4-CANCER

www.cancernet.nci.nih.gov

These National Cancer Institute programs provide nationwide services to cancer patients, their families and friends.

American Cancer Society

800/ACS-2345

www.cancer.org

The American Cancer Society, is a nationwide volunteer organization that supports cancer research, patient education programs and related services for family members.

Associated Pathology Medical Group, Inc. (APMG)

www.apmglab.com

APMG is the longest standing independent pathology practice in Silicon Valley. Our group consists of eight pathologists at two practice sites: Los Gatos and Santa Cruz, serving physicians throughout California. Our pathologists are outpatient and inpatient specialists that produce accurate, diagnostic reports within 24 hours in most instances. Abnormal cases are routinely peer-reviewed.



Associated Pathology Medical Group, Inc.

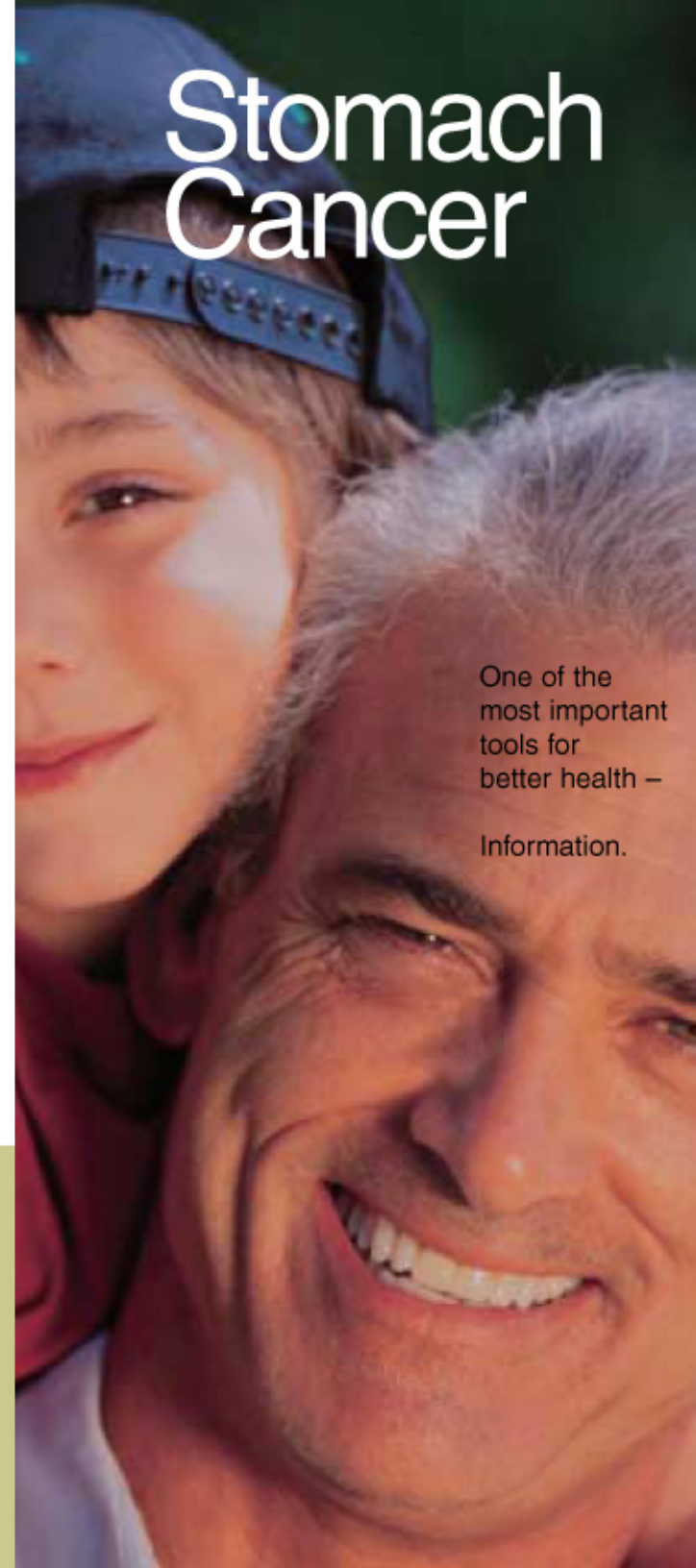
105A Cooper Court
Los Gatos, CA 95030

800.848.2764

FAX (408) 395-0471
www.apmglab.com

Stomach Cancer

One of the
most important
tools for
better health –
Information.



Knowledge is power.



Q: Am I at risk?

A: Stomach cancer is diagnosed most frequently in people over the age of 55. Men are afflicted twice as often as women, and the disease is more common to African-Americans than to Caucasians. The NCI states that eating foods that are preserved by drying, smoking, salting or pickling may play a role in the development of stomach cancer. Although the presence of stomach ulcers does not appear to increase one's risk of getting stomach cancer, the bacterium associated with stomach inflammation and ulcers, known as *Helicobacter pylori*, may be an important risk factor for this disease.

Q: What are the symptoms?

A: Gastric carcinoma is an insidious disease that commonly exhibits no symptoms until late in its development. Furthermore, many patients ignore its initial symptoms because these symptoms are often vague and intermittent. Symptoms of stomach cancer can include:

- Indigestion or a burning sensation
- Blood in or on the stool
- Abdominal pain
- General stomach discomfort
- Unexplained weight loss

Because health problems other than stomach cancer may cause the above symptoms, the appearance of one or more of the latter necessitates your consulting your family physician or a gastroenterologist – a doctor who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of digestive diseases – so that your condition can be correctly diagnosed.

Q: How is stomach cancer detected?

A: Once your symptoms have been identified, your doctor may begin to determine their cause by evaluating your medical history, performing a physical examination and ordering laboratory studies. In order to assist him/her in finding tumors or other abnormalities, your doctor may also have you undergo a fecal occult blood test (to check for the presence of hidden blood in the stool) and/or an upper gastrointestinal series (which involves x-rays of the esophagus and stomach).

In addition, your doctor may perform a procedure called gastroscopy. This procedure, involving the use of a thin, lighted tube called a gastro-scope, will enable your doctor to look directly at the inside of the stomach.

PATHOLOGY TESTING

Q: How is stomach cancer diagnosed?

A: The stomach biopsy procedure is the primary method used to diagnose stomach cancer. Your physician may perform an examination utilizing an endoscope – a thin, lighted tube equipped with a tiny camera. Using a local anesthetic, the physician passes the endoscope through the mouth and esophagus to view the interior lining of the stomach. The endoscope permits the photographing of suspicious areas as well as the actual removal of tissue samples for subsequent laboratory evaluation. The tissue samples are then sent to a diagnostic laboratory for evaluation

by a pathologist – a physician who, via microscopic examination, specializes in the diagnosis of disease. If cancer is detected, the pathologist can then assist your physician in determining the stage and extent of the disease process.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

Q: Do I have a choice of treatment?

A: Yes. There are several options for the treatment of stomach cancer, depending on your age, the size and location of the tumor, the stage of the disease (i.e., whether it has spread to other organs) and your general health. You may also have concerns regarding the treatment process and potential side effects; therefore, it is essential that you and your doctor discuss all available options leading to the development of a treatment plan that is specifically tailored to your needs and circumstances.



Associated Pathology
Medical Group, Inc.