

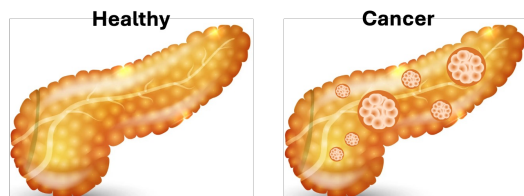


Newsletter

CANCER CONSULTANTS OF AMERICA

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN CANCER AND UNDERSTANDING®

Cancer Answers Pancreatic Cancer



The human pancreas is a remarkable organ located in the abdominal region of the body and has several functions that contribute to two important bodily systems, the digestive system and endocrine system. The majority of activity from the pancreas is directed to the digestive system where it synthesizes pancreatic juice containing important enzymes to help breakdown food during the digestive process. The lesser (but equally important) activity of the pancreas involves the endocrine system and hormone production. With this function, the pancreas synthesizes and releases hormones such as insulin that aids in the regulation of blood sugar by assisting sugars to exit the blood circulation and enter the cells throughout the body. Given the diverse functions of the pancreas, this gland is composed of various cells that have the potential to transform into cancerous cells. Depending on which type of pancreatic cell (digestive or endocrine) the cancer originates, will determine the name of the pancreatic cancer and potential outcome.

In most cases, pancreatic adenocarcinoma originates from the cells associated with the digestive process. The cancer cells replace the healthy cells that were intended to produce enzymes needed for digestion. This replacement of cells has a negative impact on the digestion of foods resulting in recognizable signs and symptoms. In contrast, a small percentage of pancreatic cancer cells originate from healthy cells that are responsible for hormone production. These transformed cells are labeled pancreatic neuroendocrine tumors (PNETs). As the tumor grows, the body is depleted of hormone producing cells and ultimately hormone levels decrease. These neuroendocrine tumors are typically less aggressive than pancreatic adenocarcinoma tumors. The signs and symptoms include unexplained weight loss, blood in the stool, and abdominal pain. The noticeable effects of pancreatic cancer become obvious when the tumor growth has reached advanced stages of development.

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At the present time, treatment strategies for pancreatic cancer depend on the cancer type and stage of the tumor at the time of the diagnosis. The surgical removal of the tumor is a preferred treatment option, however this approach comes with limitations because the pancreas is located in a region of the body that includes many blood vessels and nerves. If the tumor has grown around these important blood vessels and nerves within the abdominal region, the option of surgical treatment is not available. In these cases, treatment plans will aim to shrink the tumor mainly through radiation but could include the use of chemotherapy or immunotherapy. If successful in shrinking the tumor, the next steps will involve surgery to remove the tumor followed by additional rounds of treatment to ensure that any remaining cancer cells have been eliminated.

A common benchmark for the survival of cancer patients is described in terms of 5-year survival rates. For pancreatic cancer, this benchmark has improved over the past 50 years. When accounting for all stages of pancreatic cancer, the 5-year survival rate was identified at 2% in 1970 but improved to 5% in 1990, and is currently at 10-12%. The increase in survival rates is a reflection of improved understanding, early diagnoses, and better treatment options for the patients experiencing this type of cancer journey.

Submit your **Cancer Answers** topics to info@CancerConsultantsOfAmerica.com

We Are Available to You

Please contact us today if you would like more information about how our services can benefit you and your family.

Services:

- Individual and Family Cancer Education
- Medical Appointment Liaison Services
- Information Seminars and Public Speaking Events

Fun Facts – September

Cancer Awareness Month:

- Blood Cancer (Red, Orange, Violet, Lime Green, Burgundy) 🎗️
- Pediatric Cancer (Gold) 🏆
- Prostate Cancer (Light Blue) 🎗️
- Ovarian Cancer (Teal) 🎗️
- Gynecological Cancer (Purple) 🎗️
- Thyroid Cancer (Purple, Teal, Pink) 🎗️

September 5 – National Be Late for Something Day 🏃🏃🏃

September 11 – Patriot Day (US) 🇺🇸

September 20 – Batman Day 🦇

September 22 – First day of Autumn (Northern Hemisphere) 🍁

September 29 – National Coffee Day ☕

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