



## November is Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Month

Pancreatic cancer begins in the tissues of your pancreas — an organ in your abdomen that lies horizontally behind the lower part of your stomach. Your pancreas secretes enzymes that aid digestion and hormones that help regulate the metabolism of sugars.

- ✚ Pancreatic cancer typically spreads rapidly and is seldom detected in its early stages, which is a major reason why it's a leading cause of cancer death.
- ✚ Signs and symptoms may not appear until pancreatic cancer is quite advanced and complete surgical removal isn't possible.

### Symptoms:

Signs and symptoms of pancreatic cancer often don't occur until the disease is advanced. When signs and symptoms do appear, they may include:

- ✚ Upper abdominal pain.
- ✚ Loss of appetite, Weight loss.
- ✚ Diarrhea.
- ✚ Dark urine and clay-colored stools.
- ✚ Fatigue and weakness.
- ✚ Increase in blood sugar levels (diabetes).
- ✚ Jaundice (a yellow color in the skin, mucous membranes, or white part of the eyes) and itching of the skin.

### When to Contact a Medical Professional?

Call for an appointment with your health care provider if you have:

- ✚ Abdominal pain that does not go away.
- ✚ Back pain.
- ✚ Loss of appetite.
- ✚ Unexplained fatigue or weight loss.
- ✚ Other symptoms of this disorder.

### Risk factors:

It is more common in persons who:

- ✚ Are obese.
- ✚ Have a diet high in fat and low in fruits and vegetables.
- ✚ Have diabetes.
- ✚ Have long-term exposure to certain chemicals.

- 🔗 Have long-term inflammation of the pancreas (chronic pancreatitis).
- 🔗 Smoke.
- 🔗 Pancreatic cancer is slightly more common in women than in men.
- 🔗 Age: Over 80% of the cases develop between the ages of 60 and 80.
- 🔗 Race: More common in the African American population
- 🔗 Genetics: A number of inherited cancer syndromes increase the risk of pancreatic cancer.

### Are there screening tests available?

There are no screening tests currently available to screen the general population.

- 🔗 CA19-9 is the best available tumor marker for following the progression of the disease but is only 80% accurate in identifying patients with pancreatic cancer.

### Coping and support:

Learning you have a life-threatening illness can be devastating. Although there are no easy answers for people dealing with pancreatic cancer, some of the following suggestions may help:

- 🔗 Learn what you need to know about your cancer.
- 🔗 Ask your friends and family to form a support network for you.
- 🔗 Find someone to talk with. In these cases, talking with a counselor, medical social worker or religious counselor can be helpful.
- 🔗 Connect with other cancer survivors. You may find comfort in talking with other cancer survivors.
- 🔗 Consider hospice. Hospice care provides comfort and support to terminally ill people and their loved ones.

### Bottom Line:

Although there's no proven way to prevent pancreatic cancer, you can take steps to reduce your risk, including:

- 🔗 If you smoke, now is the time to quit.
- 🔗 Keep a diet high in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- 🔗 Exercise regularly to stay at a healthy weight.

### Reference Links:

- 🔗 <http://www.choosehope.com/category/pancreatic-cancer-purple>
- 🔗 <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/pancreatic-cancer/basics/prevention/con-20028153>
- 🔗 <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Cancer-of-the-pancreas/Pages/Causes.aspx>
- 🔗 <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0001283/>
- 🔗 <http://pathology.jhu.edu/pc/news.php?area=ne>

**For any enquiry or assistance please contact:** [wellness@medicaretpa.co.in](mailto:wellness@medicaretpa.co.in)

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