

# About Liver Cancer

The liver is the largest organ inside your abdomen. It's found behind your ribs on the right side of your body.

The liver does important work to keep you healthy:

- It removes harmful substances from the blood.
- It makes enzymes and bile that help digest food.
- It also converts food into substances needed for life and growth.

Estimated new cases and deaths from liver and intrahepatic bile duct cancer in the United States in 2017

New cases: 40,710

Deaths: 28,920

Liver cancer represents 4.8% of all cancer deaths in the U.S.

## Risk factors:

Infection with hepatitis B virus (HBV) or hepatitis C virus (HCV): Liver cancer can develop after many years of infection with either of these viruses. Around the world, infection with HBV or HCV is the main cause of liver cancer.

- *Heavy alcohol use:* Having more than two drinks of alcohol each day for many years increases the risk of liver cancer and certain other cancers. The risk increases with the amount of alcohol that a person drinks.
- *Aflatoxin:* Liver cancer can be caused by aflatoxin, a harmful substance made by certain types of mold. Aflatoxin can form on peanuts, corn, and other nuts and grains.
- *Iron storage disease:* Liver cancer may develop among people with a disease that causes the body to store too much iron in the liver and other organs.
- *Cirrhosis:* Cirrhosis is a serious disease that develops when liver cells are damaged and replaced with scar tissue. Many exposures cause cirrhosis, including HBV or HCV infection, heavy alcohol use, too much iron stored in the liver, certain drugs, and certain parasites.
- *Obesity and diabetes:* Studies have shown that obesity and diabetes may be important risk factors for liver cancer.

## Symptoms:

- Pain in the upper abdomen on the right side
- A lump or a feeling of heaviness in the upper abdomen
- Swollen abdomen (bloating)
- Loss of appetite and feelings of fullness
- Weight loss
- Weakness or feeling very tired
- Nausea and vomiting
- Yellow skin and eyes, pale stools, and dark urine from jaundice
- Fever

## Treatment:

Treatment options for people with liver cancer are surgery (including a liver transplant), ablation, embolization, targeted therapy, radiation therapy, and chemotherapy. You may have a combination of treatments.