



Stomach Cancer

What is stomach cancer?

The stomach is a storage area for food. When you eat, food stays in the stomach for a while and that is where digestion commences. Food is churned up and mixed with acid until it is partly liquefied. It is passed into the bowel for further digestion and for nutrients to be absorbed. The stomach is a large hollow muscle, whose movement is controlled by nerves and hormones, triggered by smell, sight or sound of food.

Stomach cancer

Stomach cancer is the fifth most common cancer for men and the ninth most common in women in the UK. Each year there are approximately 8,400 new cases.

Stomach cancer develops from cells within the stomach. More than 9 in 10 stomach cancers affect the cells of the inner lining of the stomach.

Stomach cancer can spread to nearby organs in the abdomen or through the wall of the stomach, to distant organs and lymph nodes.

Risks & Causes

The following factors affect a person's chance of developing stomach cancer:

- Men are twice as likely as women
- More common between age of 50 to 70 years
- Blood group A — having this blood group slightly increases the risk of developing stomach cancer
- Polyps — FAP (familial adenomatous polyposis) is an inherited condition that may increase the risk.
- Radiation — exposure to excessive amounts of radiation can increase the risk
- Family history — this is being investigated as a possible risk factor
- Helicobacter pylori infection — this common bacterial infection of the stomach lining is thought to cause most stomach ulcers and research has shown that some people with the infection may be more likely to develop stomach cancer than those without it.
- Diet — Eating lots of salted, cured, pickled or smoked foods may increase the risk. Research has shown that eating plenty of fibre, fruit and vegetables and antioxidants and vitamins may help protect against the cancer
- Tobacco / alcohol — smoking increases the risk of developing stomach cancer. Alcohol may slightly increase the risk of upper part of the stomach, but evidence isn't conclusive.
- Previous stomach surgery — Having had surgery to treat ulcers or other problems apart from cancer may increase the risk of developing stomach cancer. This could be due to reduced acid production in the stomach after surgery.
- Pernicious anaemia — The stomach produces too little of a substance that needs to take up Vitamin B12 from foods. This can also increase the risk of developing stomach cancer. Vitamin B12 can be topped up by injections.

Symptoms

Stomach cancer does not usually produce symptoms in its early stages. When symptoms occur they include:-

- Indigestion, heartburn
- Feeling bloated after eating
- Abdominal pain and discomfort
- Feeling or being sick
- Difficulty swallowing
- Weight loss
- Blood in vomit

These symptoms may likely indicate problems other than cancer such as an infection or other medical conditions. However people with these symptoms should see their doctor.

Diagnosis

Referral to a gastroenterologist will include:-

Gastroscopy — a flexible tube passed through the mouth into the stomach so that biopsies can be taken and sent to the laboratory to confirm the diagnosis.

CT scan — a computerised scan to assess any spread of the cancer.

Treatment

Surgery

Surgery is the initial treatment for stomach cancer where possible.

For early detection — surgery may be all that is needed.

For advanced stages — surgery would be used to help relieve symptoms, such as a blockage that prevents the passage of food

Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy may be given before or after surgery. It may also be used to slow down the growth of stomach cancer and relieve symptoms of advanced disease

Radiotherapy

Doctors can use radiotherapy to kill cancer cells not visible during surgery and to relieve symptoms of advanced stomach cancer. Sometimes radiotherapy is used in conjunction with chemotherapy

For further information

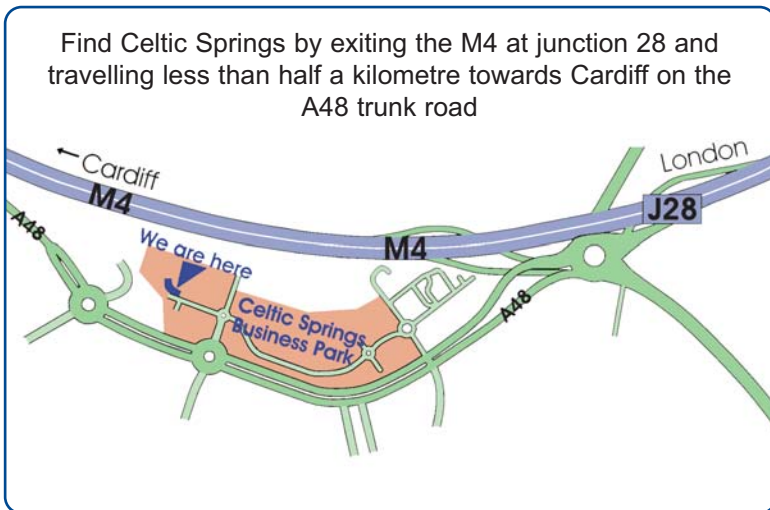
www.corecharity.org.uk

www.cancerresearchuk.org/cancerstats

www.cancerhelp.org.uk

This fact sheet was designed to help you. Please do not hesitate to ask any questions of our specialists and nurses.

If you have any problems following your procedure call Nucleus Healthcare during opening hours
08:00 hrs. — 18:00 hrs.



Nucleus Healthcare
Spooner Close,
Celtic Springs Business Park,
Newport, NP10 8FZ

Tel: 01633 815900
Fax: 01633 815915