



Patient Counseling Report

➤ GASTRIC CANCER

WHAT IS GASTRIC CANCER?

Gastric cancer is a malignancy of the stomach. Gastric adenocarcinoma which involves the glandular tissue of the stomach is the most common type of stomach cancer. Gastric or stomach cancer is one of the most common cancers of the digestive tract. The number of new cases has remained steady and the number of deaths have decreased significantly over the past several years due to early detection and improved treatment options.

Gastric cancer affects men twice as often as women and is more common in African-Americans than Caucasians.

HOW IS GASTRIC CANCER DETECTED?

It is important to quickly and effectively evaluate the extent of gastric cancer. Gastric cancer can often be identified early during a screening procedure called an endoscopy. Many times gastric cancer can spread to the liver, pancreas, lungs and other organs near the stomach. It is very important to stage the cancer and find out how far it has spread, because the treatment and the outlook for recovery vary depending on this.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF GASTRIC CANCER?

There are usually very few symptoms in early stages of the disease which can delay the diagnosis of gastric cancer. In addition, many symptoms are being treated by over the counter medications.

Possible early signs of gastric cancer include:

- Indigestion
- Stomach discomfort
- Nausea and unexplained weight loss.

FOLLOW-UP AND TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR GASTRIC CANCER

Treatment is available for all stages of gastric cancer. The choice of treatment depends on many factors including the location and the stage of the tumor, age, state of health and personal preferences. The main treatments for gastric cancer are surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation therapy. Your doctor will recommend any additional testing that he/she feels is needed to evaluate the cancer prior to treatment. Only a physician can determine the most appropriate treatment.

Surgery: Surgery is the only way to cure gastric cancer. If the gastric cancer is in its early stages and the patient is healthy enough, an attempt should be made to completely remove the cancer. Even when the cancer is too widespread to be completely removed by surgery, most patients surgery may be done with the intentions of relieving or preventing symptoms, but not curing the cancer.

Chemotherapy: Chemotherapy is the use of drugs to kill the cancer cells or stop them from dividing. Most chemotherapy is given in the form of injections, however some can be taken orally. These drugs enter the bloodstream and travel throughout the entire body. This type of therapy is useful for cancer that has spread to organs outside of the stomach and can even be helpful in relieving symptoms in some patients. In some instances, chemotherapy is combined with radiation therapy to increase the effects of both.

Radiation Therapy: Radiation therapy involves the use of high-energy rays to kill cancer cells. Radiation therapy is focused directly on the affected area and is sometimes given after surgery to kill any remaining cancer cells. Some studies show that radiation may prevent the recurrence of cancer after surgery. In addition, radiation therapy can be useful in relieving some symptoms as well.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I ASK MY DOCTOR?

- Are there any other tests that we need to perform?
- Where is my cancer located and has it spread?
- What treatment do you suggest?
- What are the benefits and risks of this type of treatment?
- What are the chances of recurrence after my treatment plan?

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

- American Gastroenterological Association: www.gastro.org
- American College of Gastroenterology: www.acg.gi.org
- American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy: www.asge.org