

Pancreatic cancer

What is it?

How is it diagnosed?



An EasyRead Booklet

Contents:

This EasyRead booklet is about pancreatic cancer and how it is diagnosed.

There are 4 booklets in total.

- **Pancreatic cancer** - What is it? How is it diagnosed?
- **Pancreatic cancer** - Treatment if you can't have surgery
- **Pancreatic cancer** - Surgery to remove pancreatic cancer
- **Pancreatic cancer** - Treating symptoms and getting support

You can get them at: pancreaticcancer.org.uk/easyread

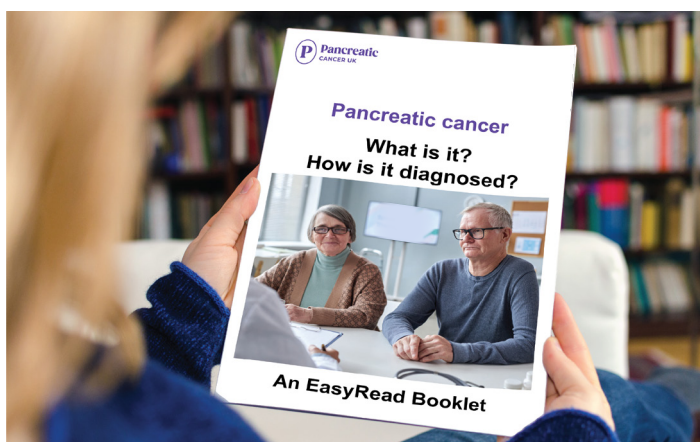
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About this booklet



This EasyRead booklet can help if you have just been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

It might also be helpful for your family and friends.



There is a lot to take in when you have just been diagnosed.

This booklet will give you the information you need.



If you have any questions about anything you read in this booklet speak to your doctor or nurse.

You can also speak to one of our specialist nurses on our Support Line.



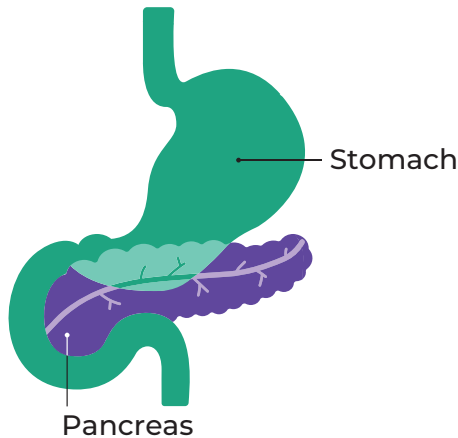
They can answer your questions and talk about your worries.

The number is **0808 801 0707**.

It is free to call.

You can also email the nurses at: nurse@pancreaticcancer.org.uk

What is the pancreas?

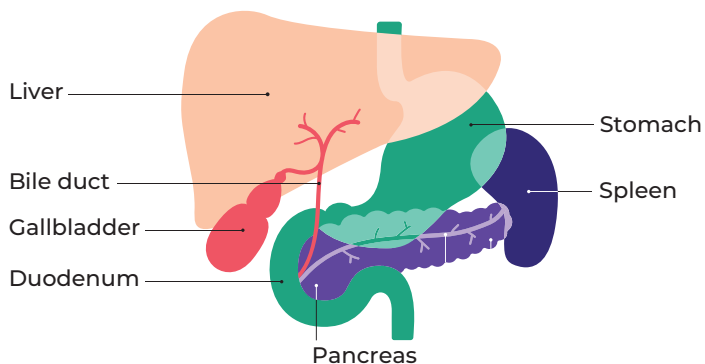


The **pancreas** is an organ in your body. It sits behind your stomach.



The pancreas does two main things:

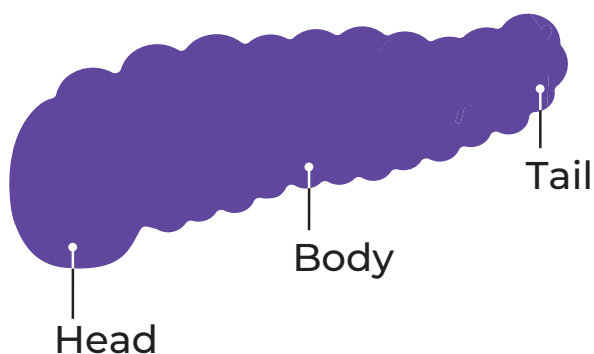
- it helps to break down food so your body can use it
- it makes **insulin**, which controls the sugar levels in your blood.



There are some important and large organs around your pancreas, like your liver, stomach and spleen.

There are also some important blood vessels near the pancreas.

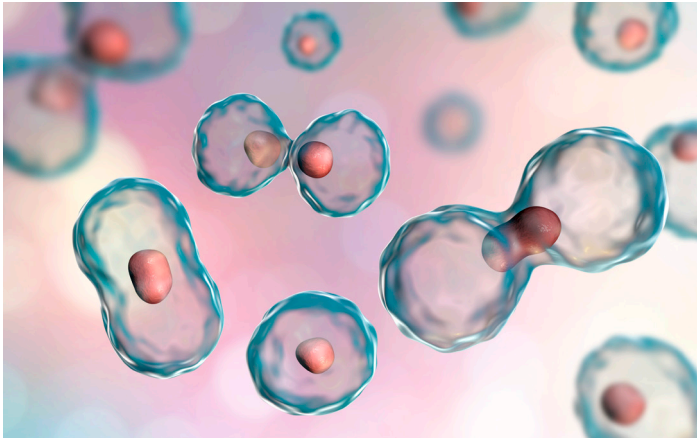
Pancreas



There are three parts to your pancreas. They are called the head, body and tail.

The cancer can grow anywhere.

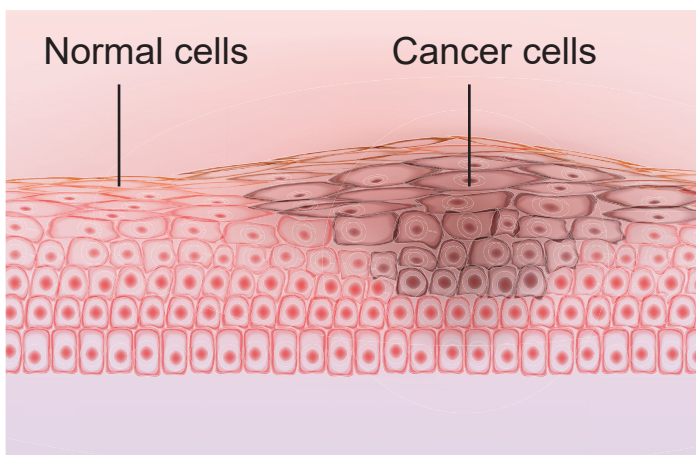
What is pancreatic cancer?



Our bodies are made up of tiny cells.

These cells split and make more new cells.

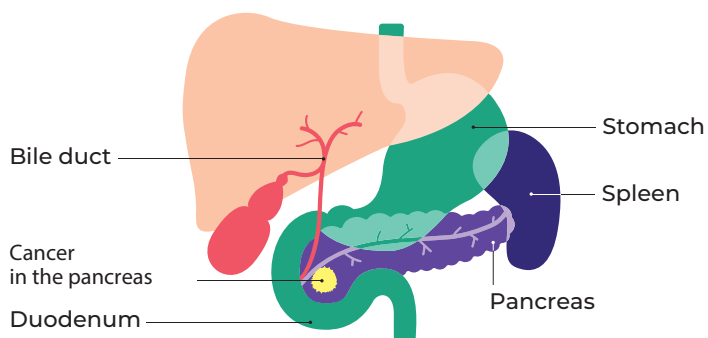
This is how our bodies grow and repair.



Normal healthy cells grow in a safe way.

Pancreatic cancer develops when the cells in your pancreas grow out of control and form a lump.

This lump is called a **tumour**.



The most common type of pancreatic cancer is called **pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma**.



You can find out more about the different types of pancreatic cancer on our website at:

www.pancreaticcancer.org.uk/types

Symptoms of pancreatic cancer

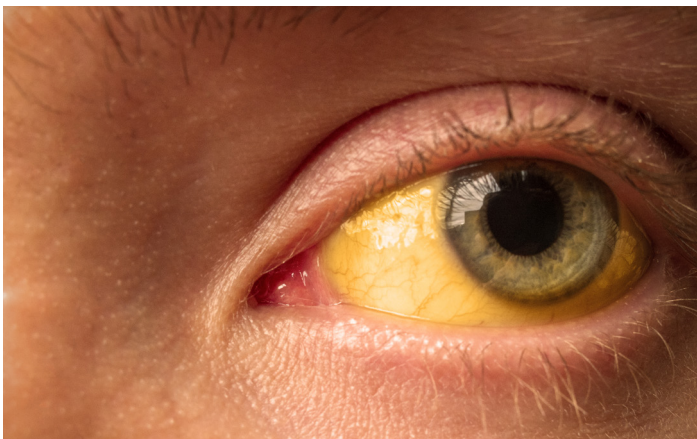


Some of the symptoms that you might get are:

- tummy and back pain
- losing weight even though you are eating



- **indigestion**, which is a painful, burning feeling in your chest
- changes to your poo like **constipation** (finding it harder to poo) and **diarrhoea** (runny poo)



- not feeling hungry
- **jaundice** (yellow skin or eyes and itchy skin)



- feeling or being sick.

Diagnosing pancreatic cancer



Pancreatic cancer can be hard to diagnose. This is because there aren't many symptoms at the beginning.

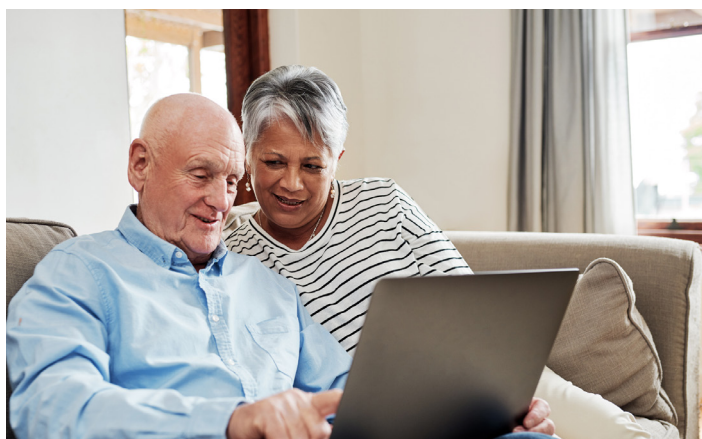
Many people are not diagnosed until the cancer has started to spread.



You may already have had a lot of tests. But you may still need to have more.



For example, tests to find out what type of pancreatic cancer you have, how big it is and if it has spread.



There is more information about the tests on our website at:

www.pancreaticcancer.org.uk/tests

Waiting for tests



You may have to wait for some **scans** or tests.

Scans take a picture of the inside of your body.



You should be seen as quickly as possible. Ask your GP when you might have your tests.

If you don't get an appointment within a few weeks, contact your GP again.



You might start to feel unwell quite quickly.



If this happens while you are waiting for tests, speak to your GP, doctor or nurse at the hospital.

Test results



It may take up to 2 weeks for you to get your test results.

Ask how long it will be when you go for the tests.

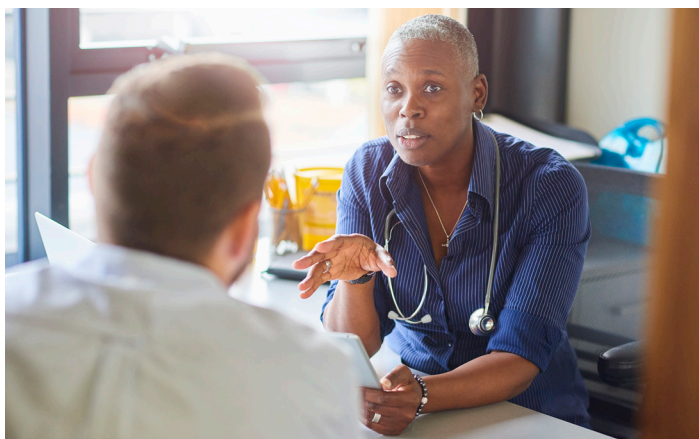
The test results will be sent to your doctor.



The doctor will tell you more about your cancer.

They may tell you about the size of the cancer, and if it has spread.

This is called the **stage** of the cancer.



The doctor will let you know if it is possible to remove the cancer with surgery.

If surgery is not possible, the doctor will talk to you about other treatments.



You may be able to have treatments for the cancer, such as chemotherapy.

This will depend on the stage of your cancer and how well you are. You will also be offered treatments for any symptoms.

Prognosis – What is my outlook?



A **prognosis** is what your doctors think might happen with your cancer.

The prognosis is if the doctors think the cancer can be cured, or how long you have left to live.



Not everyone wants to know what their prognosis is. If you do then ask your doctor.

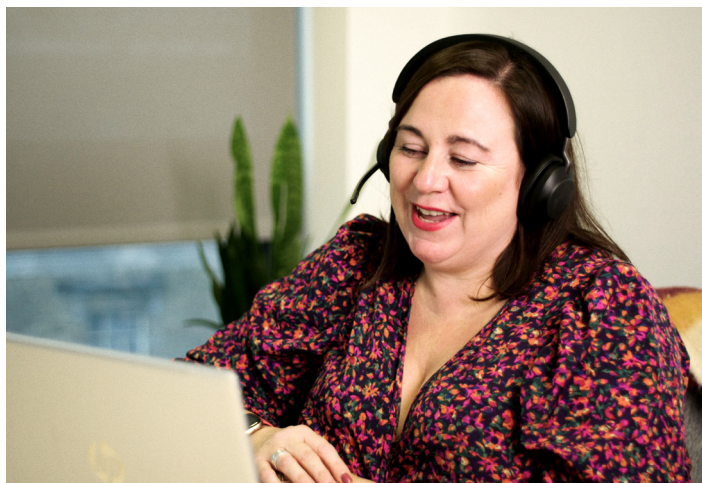
They won't be able to tell you exactly what will happen. But they can give you an idea of what to expect.



There is a lot of worrying information about pancreatic cancer on the internet.

Not all of it is true, so it's important to speak to your doctor.

Support from us



There are lots of ways we can help you. You can speak to our specialist nurses on our Support Line.

They can answer your questions and talk about your worries.

You can call them on **0808 801 0707**. Or you can email the nurses at: nurse@pancreaticcancer.org.uk



We have lots more information about pancreatic cancer. You can read more on our website.

Go to: pancreaticcancer.org.uk/information



We have videos about pancreatic cancer.

They can help you understand your treatment and care.

Go to: pancreaticcancer.org.uk/videos



We are here for you. If you or someone you care about has pancreatic cancer, we are here to help.

Find out all the ways we can support you. Go to: pancreaticcancer.org.uk/support

This information has been produced by the Support and Information Team at Pancreatic Cancer UK and BTM, who specialise in accessible information.

We would like to thank BTM's work groups of people with learning disabilities and everyone else who has been involved in the development and testing of these booklets.

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