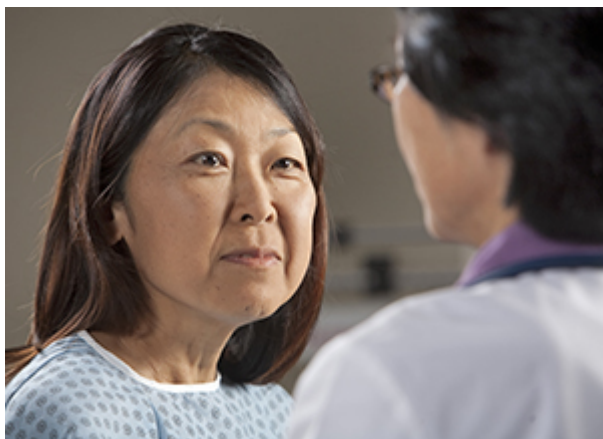


Gallbladder Cancer: Treatment Choices



There are many treatment choices for gallbladder cancer. Which may work best for you? It depends on a number of factors. These include the location and stage of the cancer. Other things to think about are your age, overall health, the goal of treatment, and what side effects you'll find acceptable.



Learning about your treatment options

You may have questions and concerns about your treatment options. You may also want to know how you'll feel and function after treatment, and if you'll have to change your normal activities.

Your healthcare provider is the best person to answer your questions. They can tell you what your treatment choices are, what outcomes you might expect, and what the risks and side effects are. Your healthcare provider may advise a specific treatment. Or they may offer more than one option, and ask you to make your own decision. It can be hard to make this decision. It's important to take the time and gather all the information you need to make the best choice for you. You may also want to talk with another healthcare provider to get a second opinion about treatment options.

Types of treatment for gallbladder cancer

These are the most common types of treatment for gallbladder cancer:

- **Local treatments.** These remove, destroy, or control cancer cells in one specific area of the body. Surgery and radiation are local treatments.
- **Systemic treatments.** These kill control cancer cells throughout the whole body. Chemotherapy is a systemic treatment.
- **Palliative treatments.** These treatments help to ease the problems cancer is causing, but they don't treat the cancer itself. This includes things like surgery or stents to open blocked ducts.

You may have just one treatment or a combination of treatments.

Goals of treatment for gallbladder cancer

Each treatment has a different goal. The goal of treatment may be to cure you, control the cancer, or to help ease problems caused by cancer. Your healthcare provider will explain the benefits and side effects of each choice. Discuss any concerns you have before making a decision. The treatments for gallbladder cancer include:

Surgery

The goal of surgery is to take out all or as much of the tumor as possible. The whole gallbladder may need to be removed. This is called a simple cholecystectomy. Nearby tissues may also need to be taken out. This is called an extended or radical cholecystectomy. That may include some of the liver, the bile duct, and lymph nodes. If the whole tumor can't be removed, surgery may also be done to ease symptoms.

Radiation therapy

Radiation uses targeted X-rays to kill cancer cells in a specific area. This treatment may be used after surgery to try to get rid of any cancer cells that are left in the body. It can also be used to treat cancer that can't be removed with surgery, or used to help relieve symptoms from advanced cancer. It's often used along with chemotherapy in these cases.

Chemotherapy

The goal of this treatment is to reduce the chance that the cancer will spread to other parts of your body. It is also used to kill cancer cells that may have already spread beyond the gallbladder. Chemotherapy is usually given along with surgery or radiation. Low doses of chemotherapy may be given with radiation. This can help the radiation work better. Chemotherapy may be given by itself if the cancer has spread from the gallbladder and can't be fully removed with surgery.

Asking about clinical trials

New ways to treat gallbladder cancer are being tested in clinical trials. Before starting treatment, ask your healthcare provider if there are any clinical trials you may want to consider.

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