

# Stomach Cancer: Treatment Introduction



## Learning about your treatment choices

There are different treatment choices for stomach cancer. Which may work best for you? It depends on many things, such as:

- The tumor's size and location
- Test results
- Stage of the disease
- Your overall health
- Your age
- Your personal needs and concerns
- What side effects you find acceptable

You may also want to know how you'll feel and function after treatment, including 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, how well they're expected to work, and what the risks and side effects are. Your provider may advise a certain treatment plan. It may include different types of treatment. Or they may offer more than one, and ask you to decide which one you'd like to use. It can be hard to make this decision. So it's important to take the time you need to make the best decision.

## Types of treatment for stomach cancer

Here is an overview of the treatment choices for stomach cancer:

### Surgery

This is the most common treatment for stomach cancer. The goal is to remove the entire tumor and any cancer cells that may have spread to nearby tissue. If the cancer is only in your stomach, surgery may be all that you need. Or you may have surgery before or after another treatment is used to shrink the tumor first.

### Radiation therapy

This treatment uses high-energy beams of X-rays or particles to kill cancer cells. The main goal of radiation is to kill cancer cells and reduce the chance the cancer will come back (recurrence). Sometimes it's used to reduce the symptoms of cancer. These can include pain, blockages, or bleeding.

### Chemotherapy

The goal of chemotherapy (chemo) might be to shrink a tumor, destroy cancer cells, ease symptoms from the cancer, or help prevent cancer recurrence. Chemo is often used for early-stage stomach cancer, which has not spread. It may be the main treatment if the cancer has spread beyond the stomach to other parts of the body. Chemo can be used before surgery (neoadjuvant therapy). Or it may be given after surgery (adjuvant therapy). Chemo may be combined with radiation therapy (chemoradiation).

### Targeted therapy

These are medicines that target stomach cancer cells rather than all stomach cells. These medicines work differently from regular chemo medicines. They only work if your cancer cells have particular gene mutations or express a protein that one of the current medicines can target. Your healthcare provider will look for biomarkers in your tumor to see if you are a candidate for targeted therapy.

## Immunotherapy

This treatment uses medicines to help your body's immune system find and kill cancer cells. Immunotherapy may be given alone or with other types of treatment. It may be a choice for more advanced stomach cancer.

## Making treatment decisions

Your healthcare provider may advise that you have more than one of these types of treatment. This is sometimes called combination therapy. Newer types of treatment may be available only through a research study (clinical trial). Talk with your provider about what clinical trials may be a choice for you.

Deciding on the best plan may take some time. Talk with your healthcare provider about how much time you can take to explore your choices. You may want to get another opinion before deciding on your treatment plan. Your provider can help you with this. You may also want to include your family and friends in this process.

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