



[Home](#) → [Health Topics](#) → Liver Cancer

URL of this page: <https://medlineplus.gov/livercancer.html>

# Liver Cancer

**Also called:** Hepatocellular carcinoma

Your liver is the largest organ inside your body. It helps your body digest food, store energy, and remove poisons. Primary liver cancer starts in the liver. Metastatic liver cancer starts somewhere else and spreads to your liver.


Risk factors for primary liver cancer include :

- Having hepatitis B [<https://medlineplus.gov/hepatitisb.html>] or C [<https://medlineplus.gov/hepatitisc.html>]
- Heavy alcohol use
- Having cirrhosis [<https://medlineplus.gov/cirrhosis.html>] , or scarring of the liver
- Having hemochromatosis [<https://medlineplus.gov/hemochromatosis.html>] , an iron storage disease
- Obesity and diabetes





Symptoms can include a lump or pain on the right side of your abdomen and yellowing of the skin. However, you may not have symptoms until the cancer is advanced. This makes it harder to treat. Doctors use tests that examine the liver and the blood to diagnose liver cancer. Treatment options include surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, or liver transplantation [<https://medlineplus.gov/livertransplantation.html>] .

*NIH: National Cancer Institute*

## Start Here

- What Is Liver Cancer? [<https://www.cancer.gov/types/liver/what-is-liver-cancer>]  (National Cancer Institute)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/higado/que-es-cancer-de-higado>]
- What Is Liver Cancer? [<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/liver-cancer/about/what-is-liver-cancer.html>]  
(American Cancer Society)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.org/es/cancer/tipos/cancer-de-higado/acerca/que-es-cancer-de-higado.html>]


## Diagnosis and Tests

- Abdominal exploration - series [[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100049\\_1.htm](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100049_1.htm)] (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [[https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp\\_presentations/100049\\_1.htm](https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp_presentations/100049_1.htm)]
- Abdominal Ultrasound [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/abdominus>]  
 (American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es/info/abdominus>]
- Alpha Fetoprotein (AFP) Tumor Marker Test [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/alpha-fetoprotein-afp-tumor-marker-test/>]  
 (National Library of Medicine)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-marcador-tumoral-afp-alfafetoproteina/>]
- CEA Test [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/cea-test/>]  (National Library of Medicine)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-ace/>]
- Endoscopic Retrograde Cholangiopancreatography (ERCP) [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diagnostic-tests/endoscopic-retrograde-cholangiopancreatography>]  (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/informacion-de-la-salud/pruebas-diagnosticas/colangiopancreatografia-retrograda-endoscopica>]

- **Liver Biopsy** [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diagnostic-tests/liver-biopsy>]  (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/informacion-de-la-salud/pruebas-diagnosticas/biopsia-higado>]
- **Liver Cancer Diagnosis** [<https://www.cancer.gov/types/liver/what-is-liver-cancer/diagnosis>]  (National Cancer Institute)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/higado/que-es-cancer-de-higado/diagnostico>]
- **Liver Cancer Screening** [<https://www.cancer.gov/types/liver/what-is-liver-cancer/screening>]  (National Cancer Institute)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/higado/que-es-cancer-de-higado/deteccion#section/all>]
- **Liver Function Tests** [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/liver-function-tests/>]  (National Library of Medicine)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/pruebas-funcionales-hepaticas/>]
- **Needle Biopsy** [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/needle-biopsy/about/pac-20394749?p=1>]  
(Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/tests-procedures/needle-biopsy/about/pac-20394749?p=1>]
- **Tests for Liver Cancer** [<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/liver-cancer/detection-diagnosis-staging/how-diagnosed.html>]  
(American Cancer Society)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.org/es/cancer/tipos/cancer-de-higado/deteccion-diagnostico-clasificacion-por-etapas/como-se-diagnostica.html>]
- **Tumor Marker Tests** [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/tumor-marker-tests/>]  (National Library of Medicine)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/marcadores-tumorales/>]

## Prevention and Risk Factors

- **Can Liver Cancer Be Found Early?** [<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/liver-cancer/detection-diagnosis-staging/detection.html>] (American Cancer Society)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.org/es/cancer/tipos/cancer-de-higado/deteccion-diagnostico-clasificacion-por-etapas/deteccion.html>]
- **Liver Cancer Causes, Risk Factors, and Prevention** [<https://www.cancer.gov/types/liver/what-is-liver-cancer/causes-risk-factors>]  (National Cancer Institute)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/higado/que-es-cancer-de-higado/causas-factores-de-riesgo>]

## Treatments and Therapies

- **Cryosurgery to Treat Cancer** [<https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/types/surgery/cryosurgery>]  (National Cancer Institute)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/cancer/tratamiento/tipos/cirugia/crioterapia>]
- **Drugs Approved for Liver Cancer** [<https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/drugs/liver>]  (National Cancer Institute)
- **Liver Cancer Treatment** [<https://www.cancer.gov/types/liver/what-is-liver-cancer/treatment>]  (National Cancer Institute)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/higado/que-es-cancer-de-higado/tratamiento>]
- **Liver Transplantation: MedlinePlus Health Topic** [<https://medlineplus.gov/livertransplantation.html>]  (National Library of Medicine)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/livertransplantation.html>]
- **TACE Cancerous Tumor Therapy** [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/chemoembol>]  
(American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es/info/chemoembol>]
- **Thermal Ablation for Tumor Treatment** [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/thermal-ablation-therapy>]  
(American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es/info/thermal-ablation-therapy>]

## Living With

- **Living as a Liver Cancer Survivor** [<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/liver-cancer/after-treatment/follow-up.html>]  
(American Cancer Society)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.org/es/cancer/tipos/cancer-de-higado/despues-del-tratamiento/cuidado-de-seguimiento.html>]

## Related Issues

- Know HBV: What Every Asian and Pacific Islander Should Know About Hepatitis B and Liver Cancer [https://med.stanford.edu/content/dam/sm/liver/documents/resources/brochures/KnowHBV-English-2018.pdf] (Asian Liver Center at Stanford University) - PDF
- Questions to Ask About Liver Cancer [https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/liver-cancer/detection-diagnosis-staging/talking-with-doctor.html] (American Cancer Society)  
Also in Spanish [https://www.cancer.org/es/cancer/tipos/cancer-de-higado/deteccion-diagnostico-clasificacion-por-etapas/la-comunicacion-con-su-medico.html]
- What Causes Liver Cancer? [https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/liver-cancer/causes-risks-prevention/what-causes.html] (American Cancer Society)  
Also in Spanish [https://www.cancer.org/es/cancer/tipos/cancer-de-higado/causas-riesgos-prevencion/que-lo-causa.html]

## Specifics

- Liver Cancer Stages [https://www.cancer.gov/types/liver/what-is-liver-cancer/stages] NIH (National Cancer Institute)  
Also in Spanish [https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/higado/que-es-cancer-de-higado/estadios]

## Statistics and Research

- Advances in Liver Cancer Research [https://www.cancer.gov/types/liver/research] NIH (National Cancer Institute)
- Cancer Statistics: Liver and Intrahepatic Bile Duct Cancer [https://seer.cancer.gov/statfacts/html/livibd.html] NIH (National Cancer Institute)
- Key Statistics about Liver Cancer [https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/liver-cancer/about/what-is-key-statistics.html] (American Cancer Society)
- Liver Cancer Survival Rates [https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/liver-cancer/detection-diagnosis-staging/survival-rates.html] (American Cancer Society)  
Also in Spanish [https://www.cancer.org/es/cancer/tipos/cancer-de-higado/deteccion-diagnostico-clasificacion-por-etapas/tasas-de-supervivencia.html]
- What's New in Liver Cancer Research? [https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/liver-cancer/about/new-research.html] (American Cancer Society)  
Also in Spanish [https://www.cancer.org/es/cancer/tipos/cancer-de-higado/acerca/nuevas-investigaciones.html]

## Clinical Trials


- ClinicalTrials.gov: Carcinoma, Hepatocellular [https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Carcinoma,+Hepatocellular%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec] NIH (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Hepatoblastoma [https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Hepatoblastoma%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec] NIH (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Liver Neoplasms [https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Liver+Neoplasms%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec] NIH (National Institutes of Health)

## Journal Articles


References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Survival in patients with unresectable hepatocellular carcinoma: TCC cocktail plus TACE... [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40702551]
- Article: Matching-adjusted indirect comparison of tislelizumab plus lenvatinib versus sintilimab plus bevacizumab... [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40625746]
- Article: Impact of the 5A nursing model on immune balance and lymph... [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40597871]
- Liver Cancer -- see more articles [https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Liver+Neoplasms%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+AND+%28patient+education+handout%5Bpt%5D+OR+guideline%5Bpt%5D+OR+clinical






## Reference Desk

- Dictionary of Cancer Terms [<https://www.cancer.gov/publications/dictionaries/cancer-terms>]  (National Cancer Institute)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/publicaciones/diccionarios/diccionario-cancer/>]

## Find an Expert

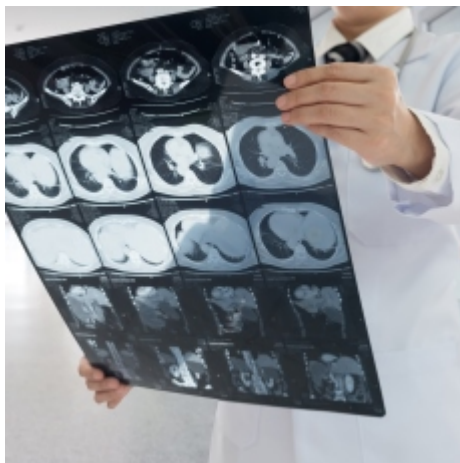
- American Cancer Society [<https://www.cancer.org/>]
- American Liver Foundation [<https://liverfoundation.org/>]
- Choosing a Cancer Doctor [<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/finding-care/where-to-find-cancer-care/choosing-a-cancer-doctor.html>] (American Cancer Society)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.org/es/cancer/como-sobrellevar-el-cancer/encontrar-tratamiento/como-elegir-un-medico-y-un-hospital/como-seleccionar-a-un-medico.html>]
- National Cancer Institute [<https://www.cancer.gov/>]   
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/>]

## Children

- Childhood Hepatocellular Carcinoma [<https://www.cancer.gov/types/liver/childhood-liver-cancer/hepatocellular-carcinoma>]  (National Cancer Institute)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/higado/cancer-higado-infantil/carcinoma-hepatocelular>]
- Childhood Liver Cancer [<https://www.cancer.gov/types/liver/childhood-liver-cancer>]  (National Cancer Institute)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/higado/cancer-higado-infantil>]
- Childhood Undifferentiated Embryonal Sarcoma of the Liver [<https://www.cancer.gov/types/liver/childhood-liver-cancer/undifferentiated-embryonal-sarcoma>]  (National Cancer Institute)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/higado/cancer-higado-infantil/sarcoma-embrionario-indiferenciado>]
- Hepatoblastoma [<https://www.cancer.gov/types/liver/childhood-liver-cancer/hepatoblastoma>]  (National Cancer Institute)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/higado/cancer-higado-infantil/hepatoblastoma>]
- Infantile Choriocarcinoma of the Liver [<https://www.cancer.gov/types/liver/childhood-liver-cancer/infantile-choriocarcinoma>]  (National Cancer Institute)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/higado/cancer-higado-infantil/coriocarcinoma-lactantes>]

## Patient Handouts

- Abdominal tap [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003896.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003896.htm>]
- After chemotherapy - discharge [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000012.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000012.htm>]
- Liver cancer - hepatocellular carcinoma [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000280.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000280.htm>]
- Liver metastases [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000277.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000277.htm>]



## MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

5'-nucleotidase [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003575.htm>]

Abdominal CT scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003789.htm>]

Abdominal exploration [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002928.htm>]

Abdominal exploration - series [[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100049\\_1.htm](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100049_1.htm)]

Abdominal MRI scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003796.htm>]

Abdominal tap [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003896.htm>]

After chemotherapy - discharge [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000012.htm>]

Alpha fetoprotein [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003573.htm>]

Biopsy - biliary tract [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003894.htm>]

Gamma-glutamyl transpeptidase (GGT) blood test [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003458.htm>]

Liver biopsy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003895.htm>]

Liver cancer - hepatocellular carcinoma [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000280.htm>]

Liver metastases [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000277.htm>]

## Related Health Topics

Liver Diseases [<https://medlineplus.gov/liverdiseases.html>]

## National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Liver Cancer* is the National Cancer Institute [<http://www.cancer.gov/>]

MedlinePlus links to health information from the National Institutes of Health and other federal government agencies.

MedlinePlus also links to health information from non-government Web sites. See our [disclaimer](https://medlineplus.gov/disclaimers.html)

[<https://medlineplus.gov/disclaimers.html>] about external links and our quality guidelines

[<https://medlineplus.gov/criteria.html>] .

The information on this site should not be used as a substitute for professional medical care or advice. Contact a health care provider if you have questions about your health.

