

about gastrointestinal cancer

Gastrointestinal (GI) cancer is the broad name for a group of cancers that affect the organs of your gastrointestinal (GI) tract. Types of gastrointestinal cancer include esophageal cancer, stomach cancer, liver cancer, pancreatic cancer, colon cancer, gallbladder cancer, gastrointestinal stromal tumors, rectal cancer and anal cancer.

At Cancer Care of Western New York, we are committed to providing the latest in radiation treatment technology. We believe that having state-of-the-art equipment makes a real difference in the quality of care we provide to all of our patients.



Your Gastrointestinal System

Your GI tract is the series of organs that allow you to take in food, convert it to energy, and expel it as waste. These organs include your mouth, esophagus, stomach, pancreas, liver, intestines and rectum.

Risk Factors

Your risk for getting GI cancer may be higher if you are a smoker, if you drink excessively, or if your diet includes lots of foods high in animal fat and salt. Being overweight, having chronic pancreatitis, and getting older may also increase your risk, as may your family history.

Signs and Symptoms

Because GI cancer includes many different organs throughout your body, there are many different signs and symptoms. Some of the more common signs include:

- Pain or discomfort in your abdominal area
- Changes in your bowel habits (including shape, consistency and how often you go)
- Blood in your stool, or rectal bleeding
- Diminished appetite
- Vomiting
- Nausea
- Fatigue
- Unintentional weight loss



Screening and Diagnosis

Colon cancer screening examines your large intestine and rectum for both cancerous and pre-cancerous lesions. We recommend that most adults start getting screened for colon cancer when they turn 50. If you are at higher risk of getting colon cancer, your doctor may recommend you start getting screened even earlier.

Other types of GI cancer can be diagnosed through a variety of tests, including imaging and laboratory tests, biopsies (collecting a tissue sample), or endoscopy (using a scope to see inside your body).



Treatment Options

GI cancers are treated differently, depending on the exact diagnosis. In general there are three ways to treat cancer—surgery, radiation and chemotherapy.

Surgery. A surgeon will attempt to remove the tumor and margin of normal tissue around the tumor. Some of the lymph nodes near the tumor may also be removed as part of the operation.

Radiation. Radiation may be used before or after surgery as a part of a comprehensive treatment plan. Radiation is used to sterilize cancer cells within the treatment field.

Chemotherapy. Chemotherapy may be used throughout the treatment course. For most GI cancers chemotherapy is delivered along with radiation.

Your physician and the Patient Advocates at Cancer Care of Western New York can answer any additional questions you may have, and help you determine which treatment is right for you.