

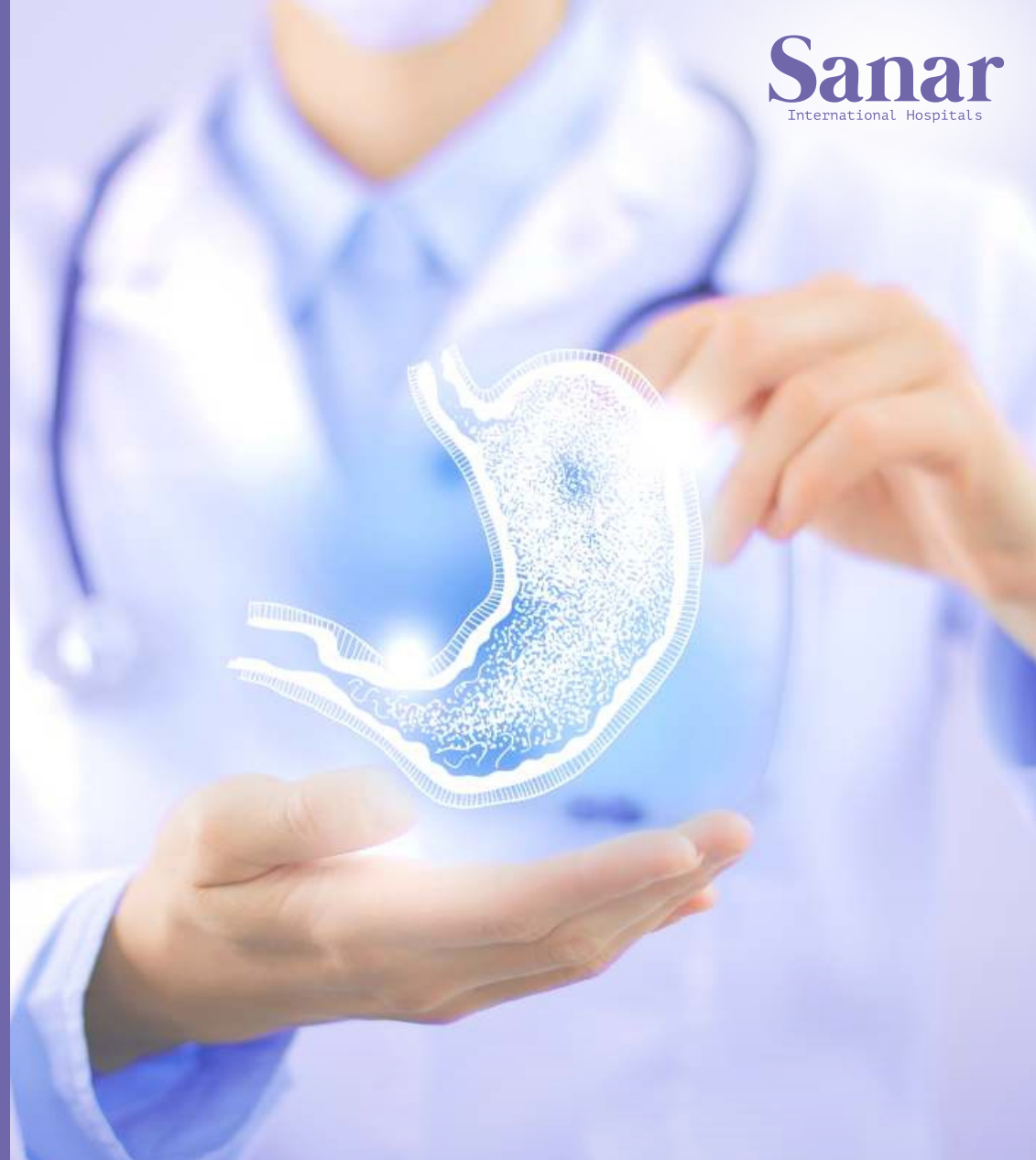
Sanar | International
Hospitals

+91-124-3528444

Golf Course Road, DLF Phase-5
Sector - 53, Haryana - 122002

www.sanarhospitals.com
info@sanarhospitals.com

Follow us on:     



Understanding **Stomach Cancer**



What is Stomach Cancer?

Stomach cancer is sometimes called gastric cancer. Worldwide it is one of the most common cancers. Stomach cancer is more common in men than in women and tends to occur mainly in older people. Most people who develop stomach cancer are over the age of 55.

What are the types of Stomach Cancer?

Adenocarcinoma of the Stomach

In most cases, stomach cancer begins from a cell which is on the inside lining of the stomach (the mucosa). This type of stomach cancer is called adenocarcinoma of the stomach. As the cancer cells multiply:

- The tumour may invade deeper into the wall of the stomach. In time, it may pass through the wall of the stomach and invade nearby organs such as the pancreas or liver
- The tumour may spread up or down the stomach into the gullet (oesophagus) or small intestine
- Some cells may break off into the lymph channels or bloodstream. The cancer may then spread to nearby lymph nodes or other areas of the body (metastasis)



Other types of Stomach Cancer

There are some less common and rare types of stomach cancer which include:

- **Lymphomas:** These are cancers which arise from the lymphatic tissue (part of the immune system) within the wall of the stomach
- **Sarcomas:** These are cancers which arise from the muscle or connective tissue within the wall of the stomach
- **Carcinoid Cancers:** These are cancers which arise from cells in the stomach lining which make hormones

What causes Stomach Cancer?

A cancerous (malignant) tumour starts from one abnormal cell. The exact reason why a cell becomes cancerous is unclear. It is believed that something damages or alters certain genes in the cell. This makes the cell abnormal and multiply out of control.

Many people develop stomach cancer for no apparent reason. However, certain risk factors increase the chance that stomach cancer may develop. These include:

- **Ageing:** Stomach cancer is more common in older people. Most cases are in people over the age of 55



- Having a type of anaemia called pernicious anaemia, which causes a lack of vitamin B12, can slightly increase your risk of stomach cancer
- Diet is probably a factor:
 - Countries such as Japan, where people eat a lot of salt, pickled and smoked foods, have a high rate of stomach cancer
 - Eating a lot of fruit and green vegetables can reduce the risk
- Smokers have a higher risk of stomach cancer compared with people who do not smoke
- Long-term infection of the stomach lining with a germ (bacterium) called Helicobacter pylori (H. pylori) seems to lead to a slightly higher risk of stomach cancer
- Gender: Stomach cancer is twice as common in men as it is in women
- If you have had part of your stomach removed in the past for any reason. For example, to treat a stomach ulcer or some other condition
- Family history. In some cases, stomach cancer may run in the family. However, most cases of stomach cancer do not run in families and are not inherited
- Blood group A. People who have this blood group have a slightly higher risk

Stomach Cancer symptoms

When a stomach (gastric) cancer first develops and is small, it usually causes no symptoms. Some do not cause symptoms until they are quite advanced. Initial symptoms may include:

- Pain or discomfort in the upper tummy (abdomen), especially after eating
- Indigestion. (Note: most people who have indigestion do not have stomach cancer)
- Feeling sick, and being off food. Some people have a sense of fullness after eating
- Weight loss and / or loss of appetite
- You may pass out blood with your stool (faeces). This usually presents as black faeces (called melaena) or dark blood rather than bright red bleeding - which is more unusual with stomach cancer - and implies very serious bleeding in the stomach or bowel.

As the cancer grows in the stomach, symptoms may become worse and include:

- The same symptoms as above, but more severe
- Feeling generally unwell and more tired than usual
- Becoming anaemic if the tumour regularly bleeds. This can cause you to become more tired than usual
- The cancer growing very large and causing a blockage to food and drink. If the cancer spreads to other parts of the body, various other symptoms can develop

How is Stomach Cancer diagnosed and assessed?

Initial Assessment and Gastroscopy (Endoscopy)

If a doctor suspects that you may have stomach (gastric) cancer, he or she may examine you. The examination is often normal, especially if the cancer is at an early stage. Therefore, a gastroscopy is usually arranged. A gastroscope (endoscope) is a thin, flexible, telescope. It is passed through the mouth, into the gullet (oesophagus) and down towards the stomach and the first part of the small intestine (the duodenum). The endoscope contains fibre-optic channels which allow light to shine down so the doctor or nurse can see inside your stomach and duodenum.



Biopsy - to confirm the diagnosis

When a small sample of tissue is removed from a part of the body, the procedure is called biopsy. The sample is then examined under the microscope to look for abnormal cells. When you undergo a gastroscopy, if anything abnormal is seen, the doctor or nurse can take a biopsy. This is done by passing a thin grabbing instrument down a side channel of the gastroscope. It can take two weeks for the biopsy results.

Assessing the extent and spread

If you are confirmed to have stomach cancer, further tests may be done to assess if it has spread. For example, a barium meal X-ray, a computerised tomography (CT) scan, a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan, an ultrasound scan, laparoscopy or other tests such as blood tests. This assessment is called staging of cancer.

The aim of staging is to find out:

- How much the tumour in the stomach has grown, and whether it has grown partially or fully through the wall of the stomach
- Whether the cancer has spread to local lymph nodes
- Whether the cancer has spread to other areas of the body (metastasised)



By finding out the stage of the cancer it helps doctors to advise on the best treatment options. It also gives a reasonable indication of prognosis.

How is Stomach Cancer treated?

Treatment options that may be considered include surgery, chemotherapy and sometimes radiotherapy. The treatment advised for each case depends on various factors, such as:

- How large the cancer is
- Whether it has spread (the stage of the cancer)
- Your general health

Surgery

Surgery to remove the tumour may be curative if the cancer is in an early stage. The common operation is to cut out the affected part of the stomach. Sometimes the whole stomach is removed or it is done laparoscopically (keyhole surgery). Even if the cancer is advanced and a cure is not possible, some surgical techniques may still have a place to ease symptoms. For example, a blockage may be eased by removing part of the stomach, or by using laser surgery or bypass operation.



Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy is a treatment of cancer by using anti-cancer medicines which kill cancer cells or stop them from multiplying. When chemotherapy is used in addition to surgery it is known as adjuvant chemotherapy. For example, following surgery you may be given a course of chemotherapy. This aims to kill any cancer cells which may have spread away from the primary tumour.

Sometimes, chemotherapy is given before surgery, to shrink a large tumour so that surgery is easier - this is known as neoadjuvant chemotherapy.

Radiotherapy

Radiotherapy is a treatment which uses high-energy beams of radiation which are focused on cancerous tissue. This kills cancer cells, or stops cancer cells from multiplying. Radiotherapy is not commonly used to treat stomach cancer. It is sometimes used to reduce the size of a particular part of the cancer which is causing symptoms.

Chemoradiotherapy

In some cases, a combination of chemotherapy and radiotherapy - shortened to chemoradiotherapy - is offered, often as an addition to surgery. If you need to have this, it is usually done around the time of the operation.



The aim of Stomach Cancer treatment

You should have a full discussion with a specialist who knows your case. They will be able to give the pros and cons, likely success rate, possible side-effects, and other details about the various possible treatment options for your type of cancer.

To Cure Cancer

Treatment may aim to cure the cancer. Some stomach (gastric) cancers can be cured, particularly if they are treated in the early stages of the disease. (Doctors tend to use the word remission rather than the word cured. Remission means there is no evidence of cancer following treatment. If you are in remission, you may be cured. However, in some cases a cancer returns months or years later. This is why doctors are sometimes reluctant to use the word cured.)

To Control Cancer

Treatment may aim to control the cancer. If a cure is not realistic, with treatment it is often possible to limit the growth or spread of the cancer so that it progresses less rapidly. This may keep you free of symptoms for some time.



To Ease Symptoms

Treatment may aim to ease symptoms. If a cure is not possible, treatment may be used to reduce the size of a cancer, which may ease symptoms such as pain. If the cancer is advanced, you may require treatment such as:

- Food supplements
- Painkillers
- Other techniques to help keep you free of pain or other symptoms

Can Stomach Cancer be cured?

Without treatment, a stomach (gastric) cancer is likely to get larger, and spread to other parts of the body. If it is diagnosed and treated at an early stage (before growing through the wall of the stomach or spreading to lymph nodes or other areas of the body) then there is a good chance of a cure with surgery. Stomach cancer often causes no, or few, symptoms in the early stages. When it does cause symptoms, they can be easily mistaken for other more common stomach conditions at first.

If the cancer is diagnosed when it has grown through the wall of the stomach, or spread to other parts of the body, a cure is less likely. However, treatment can often slow down the progression of the cancer, using chemotherapy medicines.

The treatment of cancer is a developing area of medicine. New treatments continue to be developed and the information on outlook (prognosis) above is very general. The specialist who knows your case can give more accurate information about your particular outlook, and how well your type and stage of cancer is likely to respond to treatment.

Can Stomach Cancer be cured?

We don't have a way to prevent stomach cancer completely. However, there are some things which can help to reduce the risk, such as:

- Stopping, or avoiding, smoking. Smoking increases the risk of stomach cancer, and many other types of cancer
- Eating a healthy diet with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, and whole-grain cereals
- Maintaining a healthy weight. Obesity has been linked with a higher risk of stomach cancer (and other cancers). So losing weight if overweight or obese may reduce the risk
- Treating *Helicobacter pylori* infection. *Helicobacter pylori* infection is linked with an increased risk of stomach cancer, although the risk is small. Treating *Helicobacter pylori* reduces this risk