

Stomach cancer, also known as gastric cancer, is one of the most common cancers worldwide. Approximately 22,220 patients are diagnosed annually in the United States, of whom 10,990 are expected to die. Worldwide, stomach cancer is ranked as the 5th most common cancer in the world. Republic of Korea had the highest rate of stomach cancer, followed by Mongolia and Japan. The rate of stomach cancer is also very high in China and Taiwan. Unfortunately, many patients who have stomach cancer are not diagnosed until the late stages of the disease. Due to the prevalence of stomach cancer in Asia, many Asian countries have established stomach cancer screening programs in an attempt for early detection of the cancer.

Stomach cancer happens when normal cells in the stomach change into abnormal cells and grow out of control. There are different kinds of stomach cancer, depending on the type of cells and part of the stomach involved.

Some people who get stomach cancer have a bacterial infection of the stomach called *Helicobacter pylori* infection.

SYMPTOMS

Early on, stomach cancer might not cause any symptoms. When stomach cancer causes symptoms, they can include: unintentional weight loss, belly pain, trouble swallowing, decreased in appetite, feeling full after eating a small amount of food, nausea, and feeling tired due to anemia.

DIAGNOSIS

Tests for stomach cancer can include:

- Upper endoscopy – This is the test most often done for stomach cancer. During this test, the doctor puts a thin tube with a camera and light on the end into the mouth and down into the stomach. This lets the doctor look at the stomach lining. Biopsy is often done during upper endoscopy. During a biopsy, the doctor takes a small sample of tissue from an abnormal-looking area of the stomach. Then another doctor looks at the tissue under a microscope.
- Imaging tests of the stomach, such as a CT scan or ultrasound – Imaging tests create pictures of the inside of the body.

TREATMENT

Stomach cancer is usually treated with one or more of the following:

- Surgery to remove the cancer – During surgery, the doctor might remove part or all of your stomach. If the doctor removes all of your stomach, he or she will reconnect your digestive tract so that you can eat.
- Chemotherapy – Chemotherapy is the term doctors use to describe a group of medicines that kill cancer cells. Sometimes, people get chemotherapy before they have surgery.
- Radiation therapy – Radiation kills cancer cells.

Stomach cancer can sometimes be cured with treatment. This is most likely when the cancer is found at an early stage. But, often, stomach cancer is not found at an early stage. Therefore, early detection is the key. For patients who are Asian descent, accordingly to the stomach cancer experts in Asia, routine screening for upper endoscopy is recommended.

It may seem scary to go in for cancer screening but it can mean the difference between life and death. When stomach cancer is diagnosed at an early stage, about 70% of patients survive more than 5 years. However, for patients diagnosed in the later stages, the 5 year survival rate is about 5%! Currently, only about 1 out of 3 stomach cancer patients survive more than 5 years after the initial diagnosis.

Doctors of Comprehensive Digestive Institute of Nevada are dedicated to informing this community about the importance of stomach cancer so that more patients can receive early intervention, which increase the chance of better outcome.