

The

Liker Health Report



Keeping People Focused on Staying Fit & Healthy

Fall 2019

Pancreatic Cancer

The Importance of Early Detection and Diagnosis for Pancreatic Cancer Prognosis

With the recent news of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's treatment for pancreatic cancer, the potentially deadly cancer surged to the national health consciousness. For many patients, pancreatic cancer is diagnosed at an advanced stage after it has already spread to nearby tissues and organs, which is why survival rates for advanced cases are typically low. The overall five-year survival rate is only 9% in the United States, and pancreatic cancer is the third leading cause of cancer-related deaths after lung cancer and colorectal cancer. Around the year 2020, pancreatic cancer is predicted to become the second leading cause after lung cancer.

Unfortunately, pancreatic cancer is rarely detected in its early stages, and its cause is unclear, although smoking appears to increase one's risk significantly. Other potential risk factors include family history, pancreatitis, obesity, and diabetes. Repeat bouts of pancreatitis, previous pancreatic tumors, or family history are good indicators for hyper-vigilance. Also, any of the symptoms listed below should be checked by a doctor right away. Although these symptoms may be caused by other conditions, ruling out pancreatic cancer is a time-sensitive priority. So is prompt medical treatment, especially if you're one of the 56,770 American expected to be diagnosed in 2019.

Diagnosing pancreatic cancer entails one or more of the following: (1) imaging tests (i.e., CT, MRI or PET scans) to view the internal organs; (2) endoscopic ultrasound to view the pancreas from inside the abdomen; (3) blood tests to identify tumor markers; and (4) tissue biopsy. A determination of the cancer stage (0 to IV) is made and treatment decisions are chosen according to which treatment is mostly likely to have the greatest possible success; these include chemotherapy, radiation, surgery, or a combination. Clinical trials investigating new treatments are available through the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network and the National Cancer Institute.

Symptoms of Pancreatic Cancer

INITIAL SYMPTOMS

Jaundice - yellowing of the skin and eyes

Abdominal pain - a dull ache in the upper abdomen that radiates to the back

Back pain

Bloating - uncomfortable abdominal swelling or feeling full soon after eating

Nausea / Vomiting

ADVANCING SYMPTOMS (as cancer spreads)

Unintentional weight loss / Loss of appetite

Malaise / Persistent fatigue

Elevated blood glucose levels or diabetes - due to impaired insulin production

RESEARCH PEARLS:

Vitamin D Deficiency & Depression Risk

A recent study of 3,965 community-dwelling adults aged 50 and older with vitamin D deficiency identified an increased risk of developing depression later in life. Irish researchers measured blood levels of vitamin D when participants entered the study. At intervals of two and four years, the participants were evaluated for depression. Participants who were initially classified as vitamin D-deficient had a 75% increase in the likelihood of subsequently developing depression.

Researchers described the significance of their work as related to the high prevalence of vitamin D deficiency in older adults and the deleterious effect of depression on functional status and healthspan. Because vitamin D supplementation has very few side effects and a low risk of toxicity, it is a viable intervention strategy.

J Am Med Dir Assoc. 2019 May;20(5):517-523.

Nutrition & Inflammation

Food Favorites for Reducing Inflammation

Inflammation is the immune system's way of dealing with injury or trauma (scrape, cut, bruise, broken bone, torn muscle, etc.) as well as destroying harmful bacteria or viruses that may try to invade your body. And there's no doubt that the immune system is quite effective at this task; otherwise a simple infection could be your imminent demise. Once an injury is healed or a microbial threat is eliminated, inflammation subsides. Yet if there is a chronic low-grade infection that prevents the immune system from "turning off" its inflammatory response, then there's a problem.

Chronic inflammation can destroy otherwise healthy cells and tissues, often leading to autoimmune diseases. In addition to low-grade infection, emotional stress, a sedentary lifestyle, and inflammatory foods can increase inflammation within the body. Foods that create unwanted inflammation are the ones that are generally unhealthy -- sugar, fried and fast foods, trans fats, vegetable oils, processed meats, conventionally raised/grain-fed meats and dairy, refined flour, artificial additives and sweeteners. Conversely, research shows that some foods can fight inflammation, boost immunity, and reduce the risk of certain diseases.

Vegetables		
Bell Peppers		
Bok Choy		
Broccoli		
Broccoli Sprouts		
Brussels Sprouts		
Cabbage		
Cauliflower		
Chard		
Collard Greens		
Garlic		
Green Beans		
Green Onions		
Kale		
Leeks		
Mushrooms		
Olives		
Spinach		
Sweet Potatoes		
Turnip Greens		
Nuts & Seeds		
Almonds		
Flaxseed		
Hazelnuts		
Sunflower Seeds		
Walnuts		
Fruits		
Acerola		
Apples		
Avocados		
Blackberries		
Black Currants		
Blueberries		
Pineapple		
Guava		
Kiwifruit		
Kumquats		
Lemons		
Limes		
Mulberries		
Oranges		
Papaya		
Raspberries		
Rhubarb		
Strawberries		
Tomato		
Oils		
Avocado oil		
Extra Virgin Olive Oil		
Fish		
Cod		
Halibut		
Herring		
Oysters		
Rainbow Trout		
Salmon		
Sardines		
Snapper		
Striped Bass		
Tuna		
Herbs & Spices		
Basil		
Cayenne pepper		
Chili pepper		
Cinnamon		
Cloves		
Licorice		
Mint		
Oregano		
Parsley		
Rosemary		
Thyme		
Turmeric		

Too much of a good thing can be wonderful.
Mae West

Dear Dr. Liker...

My father is in poor health, and I believe he suffers from loneliness. Is there a connection?



Human beings are wired for interaction with other humans; this basic need is fulfilled with close family and personal relationships as well as general social engagement. Often as one ages, these relationships fade away, leading to loneliness and social isolation. Loneliness arises from physical and psychological decline and is defined as a discrepancy between one's *actual* social relationships and one's *desired* social relationships. Poor health (i.e., chronic disease, frailty, mobility issues, pain) can hinder anyone of any age from engaging with others, but it is more prevalent in older folks. Loneliness itself is related to shorter lifespan, greater susceptibility to disease, and dementia.

A recent and promising intervention in helping lonely older adults is cultivating gratitude. The primary premise is that if an individual feels grateful towards others, he/she will be motivated to care for others. When individuals feel more socially bonded to others, the caring behavior is reciprocated. The secondary premise is that when one feels grateful, he/she perceives the relationships to be more "connected," equal, and satisfying. In turn, gratitude reduces a person's subjective levels of loneliness and increases his/her positive perception of well-being. Good advice at any age: Practicing gratitude can make us more positive, happy, and satisfied with life.

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