
Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Month

What is Pancreatic Cancer?

Pancreatic cancer affects the tissues of the pancreas, an organ that releases enzymes aiding digestion and hormones that help in managing the blood sugar levels. The pancreas is located in the abdomen, horizontally behind the stomach. Although it is really very difficult to detect pancreatic cancer in its early stages, people with a family history of pancreatic cancer or the ones having a cyst in the pancreas may get their pancreatic cancer detected early through some screenings.

One of the most common signs of pancreatic cancer is diabetes, accompanied by jaundice, weight loss, or pain in the upper abdomen that gradually spreads to the back. Although the signs and symptoms of pancreatic cancer do not show up noticeably in its early stages, loss of appetite, depression, blood clots, and fatigue are a few other symptoms of pancreatic cancer. Fortunately, it can be treated with treatments such as radiation, chemotherapy, surgery, or a combination of these treatments if detected in one of its early stages.

Pancreatic Cancer Treatment by Stages

In order to chart out the best course of treatment, the oncologist or the doctor will first recommend some tests to determine the type of cancer, the stage of cancer, and which parts of the pancreas are affected. Besides these, age and general health and fitness are also taken into consideration while planning out a course of treatment.

The TNM type of staging of cancer is used to determine how far cancer has advanced into the organs. However, the most common type of pancreatic stages timeline that uses numbers to indicate the stages is presented below:

Stage 1: Stage 1 of pancreatic cancer is the earliest stage where the cancer is still contained within the pancreas and is known as the localized or resectable pancreatic cancer. Stage 1 is further divided into two stages as follows:

- **Stage 1A:** When the size of the cancer is smaller than 2cms
- **Stage 1B:** When the size of the cancer is larger than 2cms but is still contained within the pancreas.

Stage 2: Stage 2 of pancreatic cancer is when cancer starts to spread into the duodenum, bile duct or tissues around the pancreas, or it spreads into the lymph nodes near the pancreas. It may be possible to remove this type of cancer depending on the growth of the cancer cells. Its sub stages are:

- **Stage 2A:** When the size of the cancer is larger than 4cms and has grown outside the pancreas but has not affected the lymph nodes yet

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- **Stage 2B:** Cancer in this stage spreads to the lymph nodes as well

Stage 3: Stage 3 of pancreatic cancer is when cancer spreads further into nearby organs such as the stomach, spleen, the large intestine or into the nearby large blood vessels. This stage is usually of the locally advanced or the unresectable stage of pancreatic cancer.

However, in some cases, cancer maybe borderline resectable depending upon the parts of the organs or the blood vessels that are affected. Even if surgery is ruled out as an option, chemotherapy, radiation, chemo-radiotherapy, etc. are used to control the growth of the cancer cells and help with the symptoms.

Stage 4: Stage 4 of pancreatic cancer is usually considered as the final and most critical stage of pancreatic cancer where cancer finally spreads to the other body parts such as the lungs, liver, or the peritoneum. This stage is also known as the advanced or metastatic stage of pancreatic cancer. In this stage it is impossible to 'resect' cancer, therefore, surgery is ruled out as a treatment option. However, chemotherapy can be still used to control the further growth of the cancerous cells.

Among the many courses of treatments that are available as pancreatic cancer treatment options, listed below are a few common and effective ones.

- A Whipple operation or a surgery may be used to resect or remove cancer entirely
- Other types of surgery options and procedures such as inserting a stent or a bypass surgery can be performed to help relieve the patients of a few symptoms
- Chemotherapy may be used before or after a surgery to remove cancer. In cases where the complete removal of the cancer is not possible, chemotherapy is used to control the growth of the cancer cells
- Radiotherapy is also used in place of chemotherapy or at times along with chemotherapy to help relieve the patients of the symptoms of pancreatic cancer. It is usually used after the surgery to remove cancer and sometime before the surgery.
- Some patients are suitable candidates for clinical trials. Clinical trials are medical research studies in which a course of treatment is tested on a patient.

Pancreatic Cancer Treatment Cost Comparison

The treatment and prognosis of pancreatic cancer directly depend on the location and the size of the tumor. Pancreatic cancer treatment cost is also directly based on certain factors such as the stage of cancer, the volume of diagnostic proceedings, the method of treatment as well as the clinic in which the treatment takes place.

In the present scenario of world medicine, pancreatic cancer treatment options are available in countries such as Germany, Israel, India, Turkey, Korea, and America but the most important question that pops up which selecting a course of treatment is, how much does pancreatic surgery cost? Provided below is a treatment comparison chart in the aforementioned countries.

Country
Germany

Treatment and Cost

The cost of treating pancreatic cancer in Germany in Euros:

- The Nano-knife treatment used in Helios Clinic by Prof. Mathias Birth- €28,000
- Whipple Operation in the Solingen Academic Hospital University of Cologne- €22,000

Israel

The cost of treating pancreatic cancer in Israel in Dollars:

- Whipple Operation performed by Prof. Joseph Klausner starting from- \$70,000
- Whipple Operation performed by Dr. Menachem Ben-Haim ranging from - \$42,000-45,000
- Chemotherapy per 1 session - \$550 to \$1,500
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Turkey

The cost of treating pancreatic cancer in Turkey in Dollars:

- Whipple Operation inclusive of 7 days of hospitalization preoperative CT, MRI - \$25,200

India

The cost of treating pancreatic cancer in India's Fortis Hospital in Dollars:

- Whipple operation - \$15,000
- The distal pancreatectomy procedure - \$10,000
- Chemotherapy per session - \$200 to \$1,500
- Radiotherapy - \$15,000 to \$35,000

Korea

The cost of treating pancreatic cancer in Korea in Dollars:

- Whipple operation - \$20,000
- The distal pancreatectomy procedure - \$16,000
- Chemotherapy per session - \$300 to \$2,500
- Radiotherapy per session - \$15,000 to \$5,000

America

The cost of treating pancreatic cancer in USA's University Medical Center at Princeton in Dollars:

- Whipple operation starting from - \$100,000

One of the major drawbacks of treating cancer in the United States of America is that the cost of treatment is exceptionally high there.

Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Month

According to the latest pancreatic cancer stats, the survival rate of patients suffering from pancreatic cancer is that just 3 to 6 percent. Of those diagnosed, the survival is a maximum of 5 years. To raise awareness on pancreatic cancer, its treatment, and symptoms the month of November is observed as the pancreatic cancer awareness month and the 15th of November is observed as the World Pancreatic Cancer Day.

Some interesting pancreatic cancer common facts are listed below to spread awareness among the people about this medical issue:

- On the next World Pancreatic Cancer day, about approximately 905 people will die due to pancreatic cancer all across the globe.
- Although survival rates have gone up for most types cancers over the last 40 years, there has been no improvements in the survival rate of pancreatic cancer whatsoever.
- If a patient is diagnosed early, the chances of the patient's survival for 5 years or more increases 10 times.
- Pancreatic cancer has always been inadequately funded and has only received about less than 2 percent of the overall cancer research funding that is available.
- Pancreatic cancer is the twelfth most common type of cancer in the world yet with the lowest survival rate due to under-research.
- Pancreatic cancer is the 7th most common cause of death all across the globe.
- It is most common in the developed countries.
- Pancreatic cancer can affect both, men and women equally.
- Pancreatic cancer is almost always diagnosed too late due to which the survival rates are so low.
- The death rates for pancreatic cancer are gradually increasing over the years while for most other types of cancers they are declining.

Success Stories

Video Credit: <https://pancreaticcanceraction.org>

This section is devoted to the success stories for Pancreatic Cancer Treatment and experiences of survivors who have emerged victorious in their battles with pancreatic cancer.

The Story of David Anderson

David and his wife were fulltime RVers, on a traveling spree around the country in their 40's motorhome for nearly 13 years. After six months of increasing, extreme pain with various blood draws and no diagnosis, David finally was admitted into the emergency room of a hospital in June 2016. The devastating and life-changing diagnosis of pancreatic cancer applied the brakes on the lives of David and his wife, both literally and figuratively.

The first chemotherapy session took place on the 11th of August, 2016 with only a 40 percent

chance of a positive response. Even though the pain reduced dramatically within a month, chemotherapy continued for 11 long months and radiation for a total of 8 months. Five more CT scans later when a tumor was noted to have shrunk considerably; traveling once more was a possibility for them.

David was invited to the 2018 National Pancreatic Cancer Advocacy Day in Washington DC to share his survival story with the other patients and survivors where he finally realized the need for more funding and awareness towards pancreatic cancer since the success rate for Pancreatic cancer treatment is already very low and pancreatic cancer is the 7th most common cause of deaths globally.

Another Story Of Two Teens - Brother and Sister Bonding Over Raising Funds and Awareness to Honor their Grandmother

Two siblings, Rose and Dov Karlin, the founders of Team Lala came together to raise funds in the honor of their grandmother Lala Greene. They have raised over \$100,000 collectively for pancreatic cancer research. Rose was only 12 years at the time when his maternal grandmother was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Karlin's fund goal on her first year was \$1,000. While their grandmother fought bravely through her cancer, she was a constant source of inspiration for the family as well as the children.

After the team's first success, Rose increased their fundraising level every year and achieved those goals too. Although Lala Greene passed away in the December of 2015, just one month short of hitting the 5 years survival milestone, Rose and Dov Karlin along with their team members, kept up the battle to fight against the disease through fundraising and creating awareness but this time in the memory of their loving grandmother. At the PurpleStride 2017, Dov topped his sister's record when he was handed over the team captainship on account of Rose leaving for college, by raising over \$29,000 individually and bringing in over \$30,000 as a team.