



What to expect during each stage of treatment and beyond

## Oesophagogastric Cancer (Oesophageal and Stomach Cancers)

This information sheet tells you what you can ask for before, during and after your oesophagogastric cancer treatment. You can ask your team for more information and support.

Working with your team means you can make sure you are getting the treatment, information and support that are right for you.

### 1. Your doctor visit

Your doctor should do a check up to see if they can find what is making you feel unwell. They will ask you about any symptoms you might be having (for example pain in your upper abdominal or upper stomach region or finding it hard to swallow).

Your doctor should work with you to make sure you have the information and support you need. You can ask your doctor about:

- What is happening in your body and why it could be happening
- What will or might happen
- How you are feeling and how to stay emotionally healthy
- Who you can talk to about getting the support you need
- Where you can get more information and support

Your doctor will do a check-up and might send you for blood tests.

#### Blood test

The doctor will take a sample of your blood.

They will test your blood to see if your body is working well.

If your doctor thinks you have oesophagogastric cancer, they will send you to an endoscopist to get an endoscopy. An endoscopy is a test to see if you have oesophagogastric cancer. This is called a diagnosis.

Your doctor should give the endoscopist information on your health in the past, if someone else in your family has had cancer and your test results.

#### Endoscopy

A tube with a camera on it is put inside the nose or throat. This is an endoscope. The endoscope is used to take images of the oesophagus and stomach.

**You can bring a family member or friend to your visits. You can ask your doctor for more information and support to make sure you have what you need.**

### 2. Tests

The endoscopist will talk about your test results with you. If you do have cancer they will send you to a specialist in oesophagogastric cancer if they aren't one. Your specialist will do more tests to see how the cancer is growing or if it has spread. This is called staging.

You can ask the specialist:

- What tests you are going to have
- What will happen in the tests
- What the tests will tell you

## 2. Tests cont'd

You might have one test or a mix of tests:

### Computed tomography scan (CT scan)

Computers and x-rays are used to make a detailed picture of the oesophagus and stomach.

### Endoscopic ultrasound (EUS)

An endoscope is used to look inside your oesophagus and stomach. It uses sound waves to make a picture of the oesophagus and stomach.

### Position emission tomography scan (PET)

A small amount of radioactive material is injected and your whole body is scanned to show where the cancer is.

### Laparoscopy

Small cuts are made on your abdomen or stomach area. The specialist puts a small tube with a camera on the end in to your stomach through the cuts. This is a laparoscope. This is done under anaesthetic so you cannot feel it.

It is used to find cancers that are too small to be seen on a CT or PET scan. This test is only for stomach cancer.

## 3. Treatment

Your specialist should work with a team. Your team is made up of people that understand oesophagogastric cancer.

Your team will review your test results. They should ask you what you want and need. You should work together to make the best plan for your treatment.

You can ask your team:

- What treatment you are having
- Why you are having that treatment
- What will happen in that treatment
- What the treatment will do
- When the treatment will start and how long it will take
- Risks and benefits of the treatment
- How you might feel during the treatment, side effects and what you can do to feel as well as possible
- What you can expect after the treatment

Your team might suggest you take part in a clinical trial. A clinical trial is used to test a new treatment, or to see if a treatment works better than another. You can ask for more time, or a second opinion before you decide on your treatment.

Complementary therapies include things like massage, acupuncture and meditation as well as other medicines you might take at the same time as your treatment. Some therapies might not work well with your treatment. Therefore, it is very important to talk to your team about any complementary therapies you are using, or would like to use.

The treatment you have depends on where the cancer is, or if it has spread to other parts of your body. Oesophagogastric cancer is often not found until it has spread. This is because the symptoms can be unclear and it can be hard to take all of the cancer out.

**Surgery** is where the cancer is cut out.

This should be done by a surgeon who is very experienced at oesophagogastric surgery.

### Endoscopic treatment

Your specialist can use an endoscope to do different types of treatment. These treatments are used if you have early oesophagogastric cancer. They can also be used to prevent cancers from growing.

### 3. Treatment cont'd

**Chemotherapy** or drug therapy is where drugs are used to stop the cancer growing.

It might be used if your cancer has spread.

**Radiation therapy** or radiotherapy is where radiation is used to stop the cancer growing.

It might be used with surgery or chemotherapy. It might be used if your cancer has spread.

#### Stent

A tube of flexible mesh is put into your oesophagus. This is called a stent.

It is used to make your oesophagus wider so that food and liquids can get to the stomach easily.

**Palliative care** can be used at all stages of your treatment. It helps reduce your symptoms and any side effects of treatment. It can help you feel well. Palliative care will mean that you can feel well enough to do the things you want to do when you are ready.

You can ask your team for all the information and support you need.

For more information about treatment and side effects you can ask your doctor or **visit** [www.cancer.org.au/about-cancer/treatment](http://www.cancer.org.au/about-cancer/treatment)

Your team should talk to you about your needs before, during and after your treatment. You can ask for information and support at any time to make sure you have everything you need.

Your team can connect you with other services and health professionals to make sure you stay physically and emotionally healthy.

Your team should connect you to a dietitian and speech pathologist while you are getting your treatment. A dietitian can give you information and support about food you can eat during and after your treatment. A speech pathologist will test your speech and treat you if you have speech or swallowing problems.

**You can ask your doctor about finding a cancer peer support group. It can help knowing that there are other people who understand what you are going through.**

**Your friends and family can talk to a support group for carers.**

### 4. After your treatment

After your treatment is finished, your team should give you a treatment summary. Your treatment summary has all of the information on the treatment you received:

- Tests you had to diagnose your oesophagogastric cancer, and the results of these tests
- Treatment you had, and when you had it
- Support services and other treatment plans you received

Your team should work with you to make a plan now that your treatment is finished. Your specialist will decide which type of specialist or doctor will be best for managing your care.

You should have a follow-up plan that includes:

- The follow-up that is best for you
- Plans for managing any side effects of treatment
- How to get help quickly if you think your cancer has come back or got worse

Your doctor should work with you and talk about:

- Finding more information and support to keep physically and emotionally well, and get what you need
- Signs and symptoms to look for that might mean the cancer is coming back
- Prevention and healthy living

## 5. Living with cancer

### Side effects

Some people get side effects during and after their treatment. Side effects are your body responding to the treatment you are having.

They are normal, but can make you feel unwell. You might have side effects straight away, not at all, or months after your treatment.

You can talk to your doctor about your side effects or **visit** [www.cancervic.org.au/about-cancer/survivors/long-term-side-effects](http://www.cancervic.org.au/about-cancer/survivors/long-term-side-effects)

### Advance care plan

Your doctor might work with you to make an advance care plan. An advance care plan is a way of setting out your wishes and making sure everyone knows what you want in future medical care.

You can talk to your doctor about making an advance care plan together or **visit** [www.advancecareplanning.org.au](http://www.advancecareplanning.org.au)

### Palliative care

Palliative care is used at different stages of your treatment to help you feel well. Palliative care can help with pain relief, to reduce your symptoms and to improve your quality of life.

You can talk to your doctor about the type

of palliative care that is best for you or **visit** [www.palliativecare.org.au](http://www.palliativecare.org.au)

### Cost

There are costs at every stage of your cancer including treatment, accommodation and travel. You might have costs if you are having treatment in a private health service even if you have private health insurance.

You can talk to your team and your private health insurer if you have questions about the cost of each treatment you might have. You can also talk to the social worker at your hospital.

You can talk to your doctor about the cost of your treatment or **visit** [www.canceraustralia.gov.au/affected-cancer/living-cancer/dealing-practical-aspects-cancer/costs-treatment](http://www.canceraustralia.gov.au/affected-cancer/living-cancer/dealing-practical-aspects-cancer/costs-treatment)

You can talk to your doctor about the cost of accommodation and travel or **visit** [www.cancerCouncil.com.au/get-support/practical-support-services](http://www.cancerCouncil.com.au/get-support/practical-support-services)

**There are a lot of things to think about when you have oesophagogastric cancer. There is also a lot of information and support. It is important that you do what is right for you.**

**You can work with your team to make sure you have the best care.**

## Information and support

### Cancer Council

- You can talk to a cancer nurse: **13 11 20**
-  If you need an interpreter: **13 14 50**

### Carers Australia

- Information and support for carers: **1800 242 636**

For more information visit  
[www.cancerpathways.org.au](http://www.cancerpathways.org.au)



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