

Radiation Therapy Center

Of Morris Hospital



MORRIS
HOSPITAL
& HEALTHCARE CENTERS

Patient Services Newsletter

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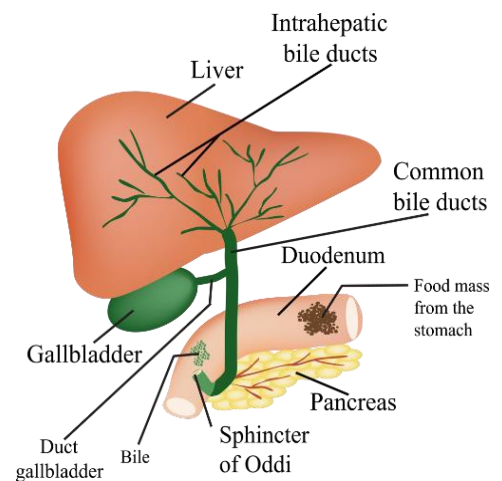
A Small Organ with Big Responsibilities

The **gallbladder** is a small, pear-shaped organ located under the liver. Its primary job is to store bile, a substance that aids in the digestion of fat. Gallbladder cancer occurs when cancerous cells are present in the organ. Certain factors that can increase an individual's risk for gallbladder cancer, include:

- Being female
- Being Native American

Although gallbladder cancer can be successfully treated if diagnosed early, the disease is often difficult to detect before it spreads to other areas of the body. One reason that gallbladder cancer can be challenging to diagnose in its early stages is that symptoms are typically not present until the disease has progressed.

Treatment for the disease depends on the type and stage of the cancer, but usually includes a combination of surgery, radiation therapy, and chemotherapy.



SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF GALLBLADDER AND BILE DUCT CANCER

Gallbladder Cancer:

Abdominal pain • Abdominal bloating
Fever • Unintended weight loss • Nausea
Yellowing of the skin & eyes

Bile Duct Cancer:

Yellowing of the skin & eyes • Intensely itchy skin
White-colored stools • Fatigue
Abdominal pain • Unintended weight loss

All information courtesy of the Mayo Clinic

GALLBLADDER AND BILE DUCT CANCER

Approximately **9500** new cases of gallbladder and bile duct cancer are diagnosed each year in the US

4 out of **10** are specifically gallbladder cancers

All information courtesy of the American Cancer Society

A Rare, But Devastating Illness

Bile duct cancer is rarer than gallbladder cancer, and can affect any of the ducts (tubes) that connect the liver, gallbladder, and small intestine. The **National Cancer Institute** categorizes bile duct cancer based on where the cancer forms in the body:

Intrahepatic Bile Duct Cancer: Cancer that forms in the bile ducts inside the liver.

Extrahepatic Bile Duct Cancer: Cancer that forms in the hilum and distal region of the extrahepatic bile duct.

According to the American Cancer Society, bile duct cancer is more common among individuals living in Southeast Asia. Other risk factors for the disease include:

- A prior diagnosis of primary sclerosing cholangitis
- Chronic ulcerative colitis
- Bile duct cysts
- Chinese liver fluke parasite infection

Because the disease usually is not diagnosed until after it has spread to other areas of the body, treatment often includes a combination of surgery, radiation therapy, and chemotherapy. www.nfcr.org

Bile Duct Cancer

The Basics

- It is a cancer in the slender tubes that carry the digestive fluid bile through the liver.
- It's a rare but aggressive form of cancer.
- It occurs mostly in people older than age 50, though it can occur at any age.
- About 8,000 people in the United States are diagnosed with it each year.
- It is important to have regular checkups and check with your doctor if you have any signs or symptoms that worry you.