

Living with Gallbladder Cancer - A Quick Guide



Contents

This is a brief summary of the information on 'Living with gallbladder cancer' from CancerHelp UK. You will find more detailed information on the website.

In this information there are sections on

- Coping with a diagnosis of gallbladder cancer
- Diet and gallbladder surgery
- Living with advanced gallbladder cancer
- Gallbladder cancer organisations

Coping with a diagnosis of gallbladder cancer

It can be very difficult coping with a diagnosis of cancer, both practically and emotionally. You are likely to be feeling very upset and confused. As well as coping with the fear and anxiety that a diagnosis of cancer brings, you have to work out how to manage practically. The 'coping with cancer' section of CancerHelp UK contains lots of information you may find helpful.

There are sections on

- Your feelings
- Talking to people: who and what to tell
- Talking to children
- How you can help yourself

- Who else can help you
- Sick pay and benefits: coping financially

Diet and gallbladder surgery

Generally, there are no long term restrictions on your diet after gallbladder surgery, though some people may have increased gas or bloating after meals for up to several weeks after surgery. In most cases these changes are temporary and will get better within a few weeks of your operation. But if you have had very major surgery, with the removal of other organs such as the pancreas, then you may have problems digesting your food. You may not feel like eating much and eating small meals often may seem easier than having 3 large meals a day.

Your bowels after surgery

About 20 out of every 100 people (20%) who have their gallbladder removed will have diarrhoea afterwards. Diarrhoea will improve with time, but it can last for many years. Some things may help. You could

- Eat a high fibre diet to absorb excess water and make your bowel motions more bulky
- Ask your doctor to recommend anti-diarrhoea medicine to slow down your bowel



- Avoid foods that can make diarrhoea worse – caffeine in tea and coffee, dairy products, spicy and fatty foods
- Wear a small pad in your pants – it may feel strange but might help to prevent embarrassing moments in public and so help you feel more confident

Diet and advanced gallbladder surgery

If you have advanced gallbladder cancer, you are likely to find it difficult to digest fat. You may feel sick a lot or sometimes be sick. You may feel too tired to eat or prepare your own meals. Side effects from your treatment can further decrease your appetite.

Before you leave hospital, you should see a dietitian, who will give you a diet plan to suit you. Preparing food is often the last thing you want to do if you are feeling sick or have no appetite. If you live alone, and do not have anyone you can depend on to help out, you may be able to have a home help for shopping and preparing meals.

Snacks and small meals

You may find it easier to have lots of small meals, rather than sticking to 3 meals a day, so have plenty of nutritious snacks to hand. People with advanced cancer sometimes find it hard to eat all the protein and calories they need. CancerHelp UK lists tips for foods that contain lots of calories in one go.

Diarrhoea

If you have diarrhoea after gallbladder surgery, avoid very high fibre foods (for example, whole grain bread or cereals and dried fruit). Tell your doctor, nurse and

dietician. You may need medication to control this.

Living with advanced gallbladder cancer

Finding out that you have been diagnosed with an advanced cancer, or that your cancer has come back, can be devastating. Advanced cancer means your cancer cannot be cured, although you may be offered treatment to try to slow your cancer down. You will need to talk very carefully to your own specialist to understand what the diagnosis means for you, what treatment is available, and how treatment may help you.

It is important that you feel as well as you possibly can. Ask your specialist, GP or hospital nurse about referral to a symptom control nurse (sometimes called Macmillan nurses or home care nurses). These are specialist nurses who can work with you and your doctor to help control your cancer symptoms and improve your physical well being.

Help with other issues

CancerHelp UK contains lots of information about living with advanced gallbladder cancer that you may find helpful. This includes

- Coping with everyday life
- Coping financially
- Finding information
- Questions you may find difficult to ask



Notes

More information

For more information about gallbladder cancer, visit our website
<http://cancerhelp.cancerresearchuk.org>

You will find a wide range of detailed, up to date information for people affected by cancer, including a clinical trials database that you can search for cancer trials in the UK. You can view or print the information in a larger size if you need to.

For answers to your questions about cancer call our Cancer Information Nurses on
0808 800 4040 9am till 5pm Monday to Friday

Adapted from Cancer Research UK's Patient Information Website CancerHelp UK in March 2011. CancerHelp UK is not designed to provide medical advice or professional services and is intended to be for educational use only. The information provided through CancerHelp UK and our nurse team is not a substitute for professional care and should not be used for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease. If you have, or suspect you may have, a health problem you should consult your doctor. © Cancer Research UK 2011. Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1089464) and in Scotland (SC041666).