

Pancreatic Cancer

Pancreatic cancer is the third leading cause of cancer-related death in the United States, with a five-year survival rate of just 10%.

In native communities, some cancers are far more common than in other populations. These disparities highlight the need for a greater focus on public health in native communities, where people are faced with far more barriers to healthcare.



What is the pancreas?

The pancreas is a gland, about six inches long, located deep in your body. It is surrounded by the stomach, small intestine, liver, spleen, and gallbladder. The pancreas has two functions: producing enzymes to help digest food and producing hormones to help regulate blood sugar. The pancreas is a small gland with a big job!

What is pancreatic cancer?

Pancreatic cancer happens when cells in the pancreas begin to grow uncontrollably and form a tumor. There are different types of pancreatic cancer, depending on the type of cells that are affected.

Risk factors of pancreatic cancer include:

- Family history
- Age (over 60)
- Chronic or hereditary pancreatitis (an inflammation of the pancreas)
- Smoking¹
- Obesity
- Long-standing diabetes

¹ According to the Centers for Disease Control, references to tobacco as a risk factor of cancer refers to commercial tobacco, and not the sacred and traditional use of tobacco by some American Indian communities.
<https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/disparities/american-indians/index.htm>

Contact PanCAN Patient Services for more information

Call toll-free 877-2-PANCAN or email patientservices@pancan.org | Monday – Friday, 7 a.m. – 5 p.m., Pacific Time

Pancreatic Cancer Action Network | 1500 Rosecrans Avenue, Suite 200 | Manhattan Beach, CA 90266

Tips to reduce pancreatic cancer risk:

Diabetes, obesity, and smoking are risk factors for developing pancreatic cancer. Here are some helpful tips for reducing your pancreatic cancer risk.

- If you have diabetes, work with your doctor to help manage and navigate it
- Take steps to manage your weight
- Eat vegetables, fruits, whole grains and legumes daily
- Be physically active for at least 30 minutes a day
- Avoid using commercial tobacco

Be aware of the symptoms of pancreatic cancer, which include:



Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes)



Changes in stool (oily or watery)



Recent-onset diabetes



Abdominal and/or mid-to-upper back pain



Unexplained Weight loss



Nausea/loss of appetite

WAKTA (Hope)

“Wakta” is the Lakota word for hope² – a word that unites all in the fight against cancer.

At PanCAN, we believe there is always hope. Contact PanCAN Patient Services for free information about pancreatic cancer, including risk factors, treatment options, and doctors who specialize in diagnosing and treating pancreatic cancer. Patient Services also offers support resources and other educational resources. Case managers are available Monday – Friday, 7 a.m. – 5 p.m. PT, by phone at 877.272.6226, or by email at patientservices@pancan.org. Information is also available at www.pancan.org.

The American Indian Cancer Foundation works to eliminate the cancer burdens of Indigenous people through improved access to prevention, early detection, treatment, and survivor support. They can be contacted at 615-314-4848, www.americanindiancancer.org, or info@AICAF.org.

² <https://www.wolakotaproject.org/lakota-pronunciation-glossary/>