

or both may be used to help symptoms.

Endoscopic dilatation/intubation - a tube can be passed into the oesophagus, under sedation to stretch the narrowing caused by the cancer and sometimes a tube can be placed in the oesophagus to hold the walls of the oesophagus open, allowing fluids and food to pass freely into the stomach.

Endoscopic laser treatment - a tube can be passed into the oesophagus, under sedation and a laser is used to destroy cancer cells.

EMR (Endoscopic Mucosal Resection)

– An endoscopic treatment used in early cancers.

Where to get help & support

Cancer Link

17 Britannia Street
London WC1X 9JN
Support & Information Tel: 08088 080000

Cancer Information & Support Centre

Main Reception
Oncology Centre
Cheltenham General Hospital
Cheltenham GL53 7AN
Tel: 01242 274414

BACUP

3 Bath Place
Rivington Street
London EC2A 3JR
Cancer Information Service
Freephone 0808 8001234
Mon-Fri 9am to 7pm

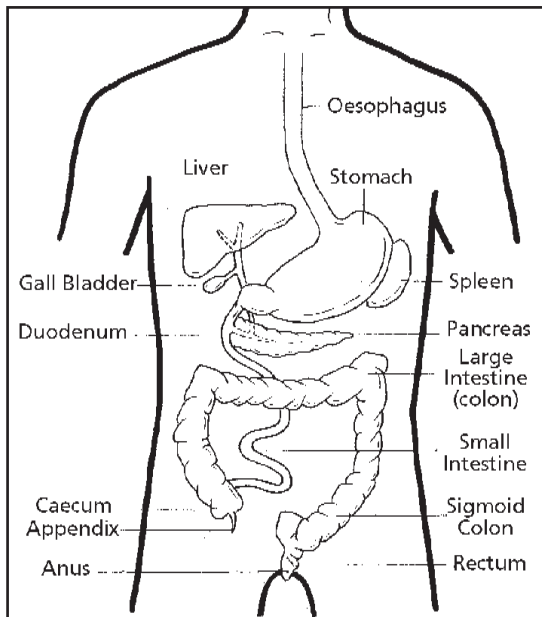
Cancer of the Oesophagus

Being told you have cancer is naturally a shock to you and your family. During this time you may experience a wide range of emotions and may find it difficult to remember all you are told. The following written information is provided as a guide to what may happen. Your Consultant will discuss your individual treatment plan with you. You may find that other people with cancer of the oesophagus are having different treatments from you. This will be because their illness takes a different form.

What is the oesophagus?

The oesophagus (gullet) is a tube going from the back of the throat to the stomach.

Food and drink pass through this tube to reach the stomach.



Cancer of the oesophagus

The cancer arises from the lining of the oesophagus and this causes a narrowing of the tube, making it difficult for food and drink to pass into the stomach. The cancerous cells may also spread outside the oesophagus and affect nearby organs, leading to secondary cancers.

How the diagnosis is made

Endoscopy and biopsy - an anaesthetic spray is applied to the back of the throat and sedation is given if necessary. Then a narrow tube containing a camera is passed into the oesophagus. Any change in the lining of the oesophagus is seen and a biopsy (a piece of tissue) is taken for laboratory examination.

If cancer is found you may undergo further tests to establish the extent of the tumour.

CT scan - detailed x-rays of the oesophagus and surrounding structures/organs to establish the extent of the cancer and any spread to nearby organs or structures.

Abdominal laparoscopy - this is performed in theatre under a general anaesthetic. This involves key hole surgery, whereby a tube containing a camera is passed into your abdomen through a small incision. The surgeon is able to examine the affected area in detail and establish whether the cancer has spread outside the oesophagus to nearby structures or organs.

Endoscopic ultrasound: this combines ultrasound and a camera on a flexible tube passed through the mouth to provide close up images of the oesophagus.

PET CT scan – a highly sensitive scan providing a detailed image of the entire body.

Available treatments

There are a number of treatments available, the treatment you receive will depend on a number of factors. Where the cancer is, type of cancer, any spread of the cancer, your age and general health. Your Consultant will discuss with you the best treatment for your individual case.

Surgery - if there is no spread of cancer outside the oesophagus it may be possible to remove the affected part surgically. However this is a major procedure and is not suitable for everybody. To assist the Consultant in making this decision you may have 2 further tests to establish your fitness for a major operation. These are an ECHO scan and lung function tests that assess the health of your heart and lungs. If surgery is the treatment choice you are likely to have chemotherapy prior to the operation.

Radiotherapy/Chemotherapy - For some patients radiotherapy can be used as primary treatment for certain growths of the oesophagus. For some patients where there is spread of cancer outside the oesophagus radiotherapy or chemotherapy