**Pancreatic Cancer**

**Description**

Pancreatic cancer starts when abnormal cells in the pancreas begin to grow uncontrollably in its tissues and form a tumor.

- When the tumor grows, cancer cells can spread through tissues, lymph vessels or the blood to other areas in the body like nearby lymph nodes, blood vessels, the liver or lungs.
- The most common type of pancreatic cancer starts in the glands that help digest/break down food, known as exocrine pancreatic cancer.
- Pancreatic cancer is a particularly aggressive cancer and may not show symptoms until it is advanced.

**Symptoms**

Pancreatic cancer may show vague symptoms similar to other conditions:

- Abdomen or back pain
- Jaundice: yellowing of the skin or eyes
- New onset of diabetes not associated with weight gain
- Weight loss and loss of appetite
- Indigestion not responding to medication
- Blood clots
- Nausea, diarrhea or vomiting
- Fatigue
- Dark yellow colored urine
- Change in stool

**Risk Factors**

Several factors can increase the risk for pancreatic cancer:

- **Smoking**: Smoking doubles the risk compared to non-smoking. All types of tobacco smoking (cigarettes, nargileh pipe or cigar) raise this risk.
- **Second-hand smoke**: The more exposed you are, the higher the risk.
- **Family history**: if cancer is diagnosed under age 50.
- **Increasing age**: More common after age 65

**Prevention**

Do not smoke or quit smoking: Quitting lowers your risk of pancreatic cancer by half and helps you live longer.

Avoid exposure to second-hand smoke: Ask your family members who smoke to stop or to do so outside. Avoid smoky locations (including nargileh).

Consult a doctor if you have family history of pancreatic cancer, associated genetic syndromes or pancreatic cysts: Some screenings may help to detect a problem early.

Maintain a healthy weight: Increase your physical activity + limit your caloric intake to lose weight

Choose a healthy diet: Rich in fruits + vegetables + whole grains

**Treatment**

Depends on the size, location, type & stage of the tumor:

- **Surgery**: Used to remove the tumor or relieve symptoms.
- **Chemotherapy**: Medications to destroy rapidly growing cells like cancer. Given before or after surgery.
- **Radiotherapy**: High energy rays to destroy cancer cells and stop their growth. Given before or after surgery.