Ready to start planning your care? Call us at 800-525-2225 to make an appointment.
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Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

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Treatment for Esophageal Cancer
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chemotherapy with other treatments has the best results.

Combining Chemotherapy with Other Approaches

In most cases, patients treated for esophageal cancer at Memorial Sloan Kettering get both chemotherapy and radiation therapy. Several studies have shown that this combination, called chemoradiation, is the best method for curing or controlling the disease.

In many people with squamous cell carcinoma of the esophagus, chemoradiation drives the cancer into remission (meaning that although there are no signs of cancer, it is not necessarily cured).

If chemoradiation alone cannot control the cancer, or if you have adenocarcinoma, we may give chemotherapy and radiation to shrink the tumor and make it easier to remove. When used before surgery, this is called induction chemotherapy or neoadjuvant chemotherapy.

The mix of chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and surgery is known as trimodality therapy, and support for this approach is growing. Chemoradiation followed by surgery offers good results for many esophageal cancer patients who have small tumors that have not spread.

Chemotherapy before surgery improves treatment for esophageal cancer in several ways:

- It can reduce the risk that the cancer will recur after the tumor has been removed.
- It can shrink the tumor, making it easier to remove the cancer in its entirety.
- It can improve a person's ability to swallow, often after just two cycles of treatment, if a tumor is blocking the esophagus.

Chemotherapy is typically given with radiation therapy for six to ten weeks before surgery.

Imaging and Chemotherapy

During your treatment, your doctor may recommend periodic PET scans to see if your treatment is working. If it doesn't look like the tumor is shrinking, your doctor may recommend changing your medications.

Gaast AV et al. Effect of preoperative concurrent chemoradiotherapy on survival of patients with resectable esophageal or esophagogastric

junction cancer: Results from a multicenter randomized phase III study. J Clin Oncol 28:15s, 2010.

Request an Appointment

Call 800-525-2225
Available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. (Eastern time)

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