

Ready to start planning your care? Call us at [800-525-2225](tel:800-525-2225) to make an appointment.

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Cancer Center

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— Consult a doctor if you experience persistent heartburn, which may be a sign of [gastroesophageal reflux disease \(GERD\)](#).

Exercise regularly and avoid becoming overweight.

Consider the risk factors and regular screening for [conditions](#) that can lead to certain types of esophageal cancer.

The following are the most common risk factors for esophageal cancer.

Age: Esophageal cancer is most often diagnosed in people over age 50.

Gender: Esophageal cancer is more common in men than women.

Tobacco and alcohol use: Use of tobacco in any form can increase your risk of developing esophageal cancer, particularly squamous cell carcinoma. The same is true of heavy use of alcohol over a long period of time.

Barrett's esophagus: The long-term reflux of acid from the stomach into the esophagus caused by [Barrett's esophagus](#) increases the risk of esophageal adenocarcinoma.

Race: Adenocarcinoma is more common in white men than men of other races, while squamous cell cancer of the esophagus is more common among blacks than whites.

Obesity: Being overweight is a risk factor for esophageal adenocarcinoma.

Ingestion of lye: Accidental ingestion of cleaning liquids containing lye may increase your chances of getting squamous cell esophageal cancer, especially if the accident occurred in childhood.

Vitamin deficiencies: Some studies have linked esophageal cancer to deficiencies in beta-carotene, vitamin E, selenium, or iron.

A variety of other illnesses and medical conditions have been associated with an increased risk of esophageal cancer. These include:

cancer of the head, neck, or lungs

infection with human papillomavirus

[achalasia](#), a condition in which the valve between the esophagus and the stomach does not open properly and the esophageal pump stops working

tylosis, a very rare inherited disease that causes excess skin growth on the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet

esophageal webs, abnormal bands of tissue that extend inward into the esophagus, making it difficult to swallow

GERD and Esophageal Cancer

Normally, a muscle at the end of the esophagus opens to allow food to enter the stomach and then closes to prevent harmful digestive acids from bubbling back up. When this sphincter muscle does not function normally, it can lead to a condition known as gastroesophageal reflux disease, or [GERD](#). Studies have shown that having severe GERD over the course of many years increases the chance of developing adenocarcinoma of the esophagus.

Request an Appointment

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

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