

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

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Memorial Sloan Kettering
Cancer Center

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Our team of specialists such as surgeon Alice Wei provide expert care to people with gallbladder cancer.

If you or someone you care about has been diagnosed with gallbladder cancer, you may face a lot of difficult questions. Where should you go for care? What are your treatment options? How can you keep your quality of life?

Reading this guide is a good place to begin finding answers. From here, you can visit other sections of our gallbladder cancer guide for more in-depth information. The information in this guide relates only to gallbladder cancer. There are many similarities between gallbladder cancer and bile duct cancer. Read more about [bile duct cancer \(also called cholangiocarcinoma\)](#).

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What is gallbladder cancer?

This information is about gallbladder cancer.

[Read more about bile duct cancer.](#)

Gallbladder cancer is a disease that begins in the gallbladder, a small, pear-shaped organ located just beneath the liver. The gallbladder stores and concentrates bile. Bile is a fluid made by the liver that helps digest fats in the small intestine. Gallbladder cancer is rare and typically strikes older people (age 70 and above). It usually responds well to treatment when diagnosed early. However, many people are diagnosed at a later stage.

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What are the symptoms of gallbladder cancer?

Gallbladder cancer usually doesn't cause symptoms until it reaches an advanced stage and has spread to other organs and tissues. But some people may notice early symptoms. These can include pain or bloating in the belly, nausea and vomiting, loss of appetite or unexplained weight loss, fever, fatigue, and yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes (jaundice). These symptoms are often caused by something other than gallbladder cancer.

[Learn more about the symptoms of gallbladder cancer.](#)

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What are the types of gallbladder cancer?

Most gallbladder cancer is adenocarcinoma. This growth begins in the glandlike cells that line the insides of the gallbladder. Less-common types of gallbladder cancer include papillary adenocarcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, adenosquamous carcinoma, and carcinosarcoma.

[Learn more about the types of gallbladder cancer.](#)

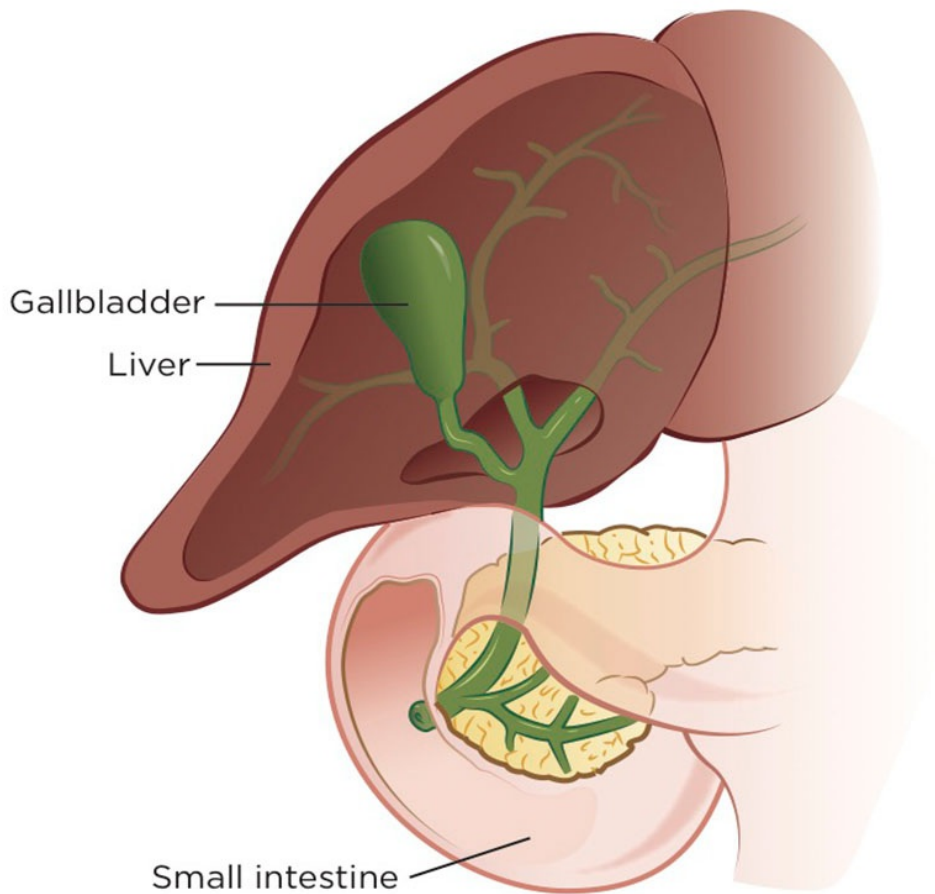
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What are the risk factors for gallbladder cancer?

Gallstones are the biggest risk factor for gallbladder cancer. These are hard, rocklike formations in the gallbladder made of cholesterol and other substances. Gallstones are more common in women. This makes women twice as likely as men to develop gallbladder cancer. Other risk factors include:

- being age 70 or older

- having a condition called porcelain gallbladder, in which the wall of the gallbladder becomes covered with calcium deposits



The gallbladder, a small, pear-shaped organ located just beneath the liver, stores and concentrates bile.

obesity

a family history of gallbladder cancer

[Learn more about the risk factors for gallbladder cancer.](#)

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How is gallbladder cancer diagnosed?

Gallbladder cancer is most often discovered when the gallbladder is removed to treat gallstones or another condition. Sometimes gallbladder cancer is found after a person becomes jaundiced (yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes). It may be detected when an imaging scan is done for another reason or after abnormal results from a blood test.

[Learn more about how gallbladder cancer is diagnosed.](#)

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What are the treatments for gallbladder cancer?

We may recommend surgery, chemotherapy radiation therapy, or a combination of these. Surgery is the preferred treatment for gallbladder cancer that has not spread and offers the best chance for a cure. The most effective type of surgery is a radical cholecystectomy. In this procedure, a surgeon removes the gallbladder and some of the lymph nodes and tissues surrounding the tumor. At MSK, we may use additional therapies to treat gallbladder cancer that has spread to other parts of the body or to keep it from coming back after surgery.

[Learn more about the treatments for gallbladder cancer.](#)

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Why should I choose Memorial Sloan Kettering for gallbladder cancer treatment?

MSK's gallbladder cancer experts deliver the highest quality compassionate cancer care. We consider each person's needs and develop a personalized treatment plan for every person we care for.

At MSK, we offer:

A multidisciplinary team of experts who are highly experienced in the treatment of gallbladder cancer. This includes world-class specialists in surgery, chemotherapy, radiology, pathology, nursing, and social work. Input from several experts is an essential part of care plans at MSK, since many people with gallbladder cancer will receive more than one type of treatment.

Close collaboration among these experts. Members of our gallbladder cancer team meet regularly to discuss the treatment of the people we care for. We bring a variety of clinical perspectives to develop individualized care plans for each patient.

Highly skilled surgeons who have extensive experience removing gallbladder tumors.

Medical oncologists with vast experience in giving chemotherapy to people with gallbladder cancer. We carefully tailor treatments to be as effective as possible while minimizing side effects.

Radiation oncologists who use advanced techniques to treat gallbladder tumors that cannot be removed by surgery. We also use radiation to shrink tumors before surgery or, after surgery, to treat the area where the gallbladder once was to prevent the cancer from returning.

A dedicated team of nurses who specialize in caring for people with gallbladder cancer while they are in the hospital as well as during outpatient visits. Each nurse works with a primary doctor to oversee every patient's care.

Minimally invasive symptom relief for people who are not candidates for surgery. These procedures can relieve such symptoms as pain, nausea, and infection.

Access to clinical trials investigating new and improved treatments for gallbladder cancer. Sometimes these studies offer therapies years before they are available anywhere else.

A comprehensive program to support the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of people with gallbladder cancer during and after treatment.

Flexibility in how and where to receive treatment. Our specialists are conveniently located in Manhattan and at our regional outpatient locations in New Jersey, on Long Island, and in Westchester County. This provides our patients with the same outstanding care from MSK doctors but closer to home.

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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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