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 Liver Cancer
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ABOUT US

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Interventional radiologist Stephen Solomon (left) treats liver cancer with surgery. He uses CT, ultrasound, and MRI to guide minimally invasive procedures for removing liver tumors.

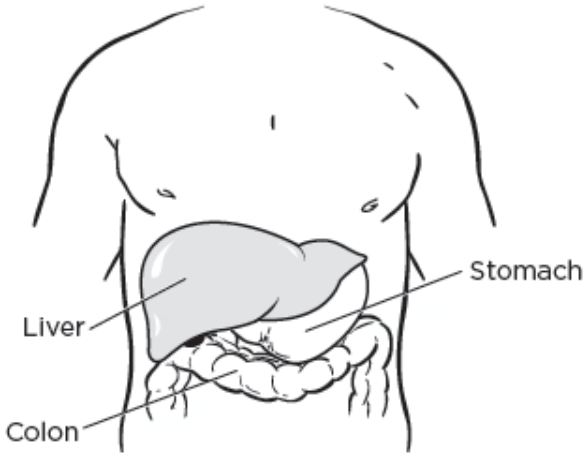
When you choose MSK for your liver cancer surgery, you'll often have better results than if you had surgery somewhere else.

Why is Liver Surgery So Complex?

Your liver is a large organ located on the right side of your body, just under your ribs. It stores and filters blood, makes substances your blood needs to clot, and does many other important functions.

Liver surgery is hard. Many of the important blood vessels leading to and from the heart pass by this organ. Also, the liver can tear easily, and it bleeds a lot when it's injured.

MSK's liver surgeons do hundreds of liver cancer operations each year. They are experts in methods that can limit blood loss, so there's less need for blood transfusions during surgery.



The liver sits under your ribs on the right side of your stomach.

When is Surgery Recommended for Liver Cancer Treatment?

MSK experts choose the best treatment approach for you, based on the stage of liver cancer. The cancer's stage tells us how far the disease has spread through your body.

Surgery often is the best treatment for early-stage primary liver cancer that has not spread to nearby blood vessels. Before you have surgery, it's important to test you for other medical conditions, such as liver cirrhosis (scarring).

We may recommend chemotherapy before surgery to help shrink your tumor first. This depends on your liver cancer diagnosis, the cancer stage, and other factors.

Liver surgery may not be the best treatment if you have:

- Advanced disease.
- Very bad cirrhosis.
- Liver failure.
- Other conditions that affect your liver's health, such as hepatitis or diabetes.

Types of Surgeries for Liver Cancer

Liver Resection Surgery

A liver resection is surgery to remove areas of your liver that have tumors. Your surgeon will also take out a small amount of healthy tissue around the tumor. This creates a safe area in case any cancer cells were missed during your surgery. How much of your liver is removed depends on the tumor's size and location.

Livers can regenerate (grow back). Even if we remove 80% of your liver, which is almost all of it, it will rebuild itself in a few weeks. We can safely remove at least 80% of your liver during a liver resection.

MSK uses surgery methods that keep healthy parts of your liver safe, so there are fewer complications. You may have a portal vein embolization. This procedure blocks the flow of blood to areas with a tumor. That means more blood flows to the healthy part of your liver, which makes it grow. You'll have a liver resection to remove the areas with tumors about 3 to 4 weeks later.

Liver Transplant Surgery

A liver transplant is surgery to remove your diseased or injured liver. That liver is replaced with a healthy one from another person, called a donor. Liver transplantation also is an option for some people with primary liver cancer.

Who Can Get a Liver Transplant?

A liver transplant may be right for you if:

- Your tumors are small in size and number,
- They have not spread to nearby blood vessels, and
- You don't have cirrhosis or another liver condition.

Your MSK care team will talk with you about whether a liver transplant may be right for you. They can also help connect you with liver transplant centers at recommended local hospitals.

Minimally Invasive Liver Surgeries

At MSK, interventional radiologists are with you in the operating room. They will help with minimally invasive surgery, a procedure done with small incisions (cuts). This method reduces side effects and helps you recover faster. There are minimally invasive procedures for primary liver cancer, such as ablation, NanoKnife®, or embolization.

Surgery for Cholangiocarcinoma and Other Rare and Complex Liver Cancers

Many surgeons do not have the experience needed for the complex primary liver cancers surgeries that MSK surgeons perform often. For example, MSK experts manage cholangiocarcinoma, a rare cancer that starts in bile duct cells. We're also one of the few centers in the United States experienced in treating fibrolamellar-hepatocellular carcinoma.

Metastatic Liver Cancer Surgical Treatments

Secondary liver cancer is cancer that starts somewhere in the body and spreads to the liver. Liver metastases are tumors that have metastasized (spread) to the liver from another part of the body. MSK's team of liver cancer specialists expertly diagnose secondary liver cancer.

Surgery to remove liver metastases (secondary liver cancer) can be complex. MSK has a team of experts in surgery for liver metastases to remove these tumors.

Liver Cancer Surgery in New York City: Why Choose MSK?

MSK's expert doctors are among the most experienced in the world at diagnosing and treating primary liver cancer.

- Each year, our liver surgeons in New York City do hundreds of liver cancer operations. Examples are liver resections, minimally invasive procedures, and surgeries to remove rare and complex liver tumors.
- In the past 10 years, MSK specialists cared for more than 5,000 people with primary liver cancer.
- We often offer treatment to people with liver tumors that other hospitals said they cannot operate on.

Request an Appointment

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

Make an Appointment

PREVIOUS

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