

Ready to start planning your care? Call us at [646-926-0945](tel:646-926-0945) to make an appointment.

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Memorial Sloan Kettering  
Cancer Center

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Our [Pancreatic Cyst Surveillance Program](#) is among the largest of its kind in the United States.

For almost 30 years, our experts have safely monitored more than 5,000 people with pancreatic cysts. They will know when the time has come for you to need treatment. Our team of [pancreatic experts](#) will then make a treatment plan that's right for you.

The treatment for pancreatic cysts is surgery. The surgery methods we use for [pancreatic cyst removal](#) are the same as for pancreatic cancer surgery.

When you join our Surveillance Program, you regularly see your doctor as well as a [nurse practitioner](#) (NP). An NP has special training in managing your health.

## Should you have surveillance or surgery?

Surveillance: During monitoring, there's a risk a cyst is cancer, or can become cancer.

Surgery: There also are risks when you have pancreatic surgery. This is a complex operation because of the location of the pancreas. It's not possible to simply drain or aspirate (suction out) a pancreatic cyst.

## Surgery for a pancreatic cyst

Sometimes it's best to remove a cyst through [surgery](#) if the cyst:

- Is larger than 3 centimeters.
- Is partly solid.
- Is growing and causing pain or pressure on other areas, such as the bile duct.

The cyst may not have these things when it's first diagnosed. But they can happen over time. That's why joining a [Pancreatic Cyst Surveillance Program](#) is very important.

We may recommend removing cysts if the pancreatic duct (the main draining system of the pancreas) is dilated (widened).

MSK's surgery team does about 350 pancreatic operations each year. That's among the most surgeries for pancreatic cancer in New York City, as well as in North America.

Pancreatic surgery is a very complex operation. Patients at hospitals that do a higher number of pancreatic surgeries have better treatments results.

Our surgeons are experts at all surgeries for pancreatic cysts:

- The [Whipple procedure](#) is done to remove a tumor in the head of the pancreas.
- [Distal pancreatectomy](#) (PAN-kree-uh-TEK-toh-mee) is a surgery to remove a tumor from the body or tail of the pancreas.
- [Total pancreatectomy](#) is a surgery to remove the whole pancreas.

## Follow-up care and support

MSK offers counseling and other support services to help with a pancreatic cyst diagnosis.

### Counseling and support

Sometimes, you and your loved ones just need someone to talk to. We have people trained to help you make sense of what it means to have a pancreatic cyst.

Our [Counseling Center](#) offers both individual and group counseling sessions to help you and your family cope with your diagnosis. These sessions can be a healthy way to work through emotions that sometimes are part of treatment and recovery.

[Learn more about how we can support your emotional well-being.](#)

### Integrative medicine

Our [Integrative Medicine Service](#) can be a valuable part of your treatment plan. Integrative medicine therapies, also called complementary therapies, are therapies and treatments that go along with your care. They can help you control symptoms and side effects of treatment. They can also help you gain strength during your treatment and recovery.

We offer massage, acupuncture, hypnotherapy, meditation, visualization, music therapy, and nutritional counseling programs. We have classes in yoga, tai chi, and chair aerobics.

### Request an Appointment

Call [800-525-2225](tel:800-525-2225)

We're available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

[Make an appointment](#)

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