

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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This volume is among the highest in New York City and across North America as well. Patients at hospitals that do a higher number of pancreatic surgeries have better treatment results.

Pancreatic cysts

Surgery is also the best [treatment for pancreatic cysts](#). The surgery methods we use for [pancreatic cyst removal](#) are the same as for pancreatic cancer. Most pancreatic cysts are benign (not cancer). But some are precancerous and can turn into pancreatic cancer.



William Jarnagin, Chief of the Hepatobiliary Service, is part of MSK's large team of experts in treating pancreatic cancer.

Learn more: [Answers to common questions about pancreatic cancer surgery](#)

There are 2 approaches to surgery for pancreatic cancer.

Curative surgery

There's a better chance we can cure pancreatic cancer with surgery if the tumor is only in the pancreas. Curative (able to cure) surgery is when there's a chance surgery will remove all of the tumor and cancer.

Palliative surgery

Palliative surgery is when surgery can help with the symptoms of cancer and improve your quality of life. It can also help stop symptoms from getting worse. It may stop complications (problems), such as a blocked bile duct.

Most people learn they have pancreatic cancer after it's already spread outside the pancreas. It's either locally advanced disease or metastatic pancreatic cancer. Surgery will not cure pancreatic cancer at this stage.

Sometimes a curative surgery turns into palliative surgery. After your surgeon starts the operation, they decide surgery cannot cure the cancer. Research

suggests this happens during 8 to 33 out of every 100 curative surgeries.

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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MSK surgeons are experts in all pancreatic cancer surgery methods:

Whipple Procedure

+

Distal Pancreatectomy

+

Total Pancreatectomy

+

Central Pancreatectomy

+

Minimally Invasive Surgery for Pancreatic Cancer

We can do some pancreatic cancer surgeries using methods that are minimally invasive. This kind of surgery does less harm to your body because it's done with small incisions (cuts). Laparoscopic and robotic-assisted surgeries are minimally invasive.

Laparoscopic surgery

In laparoscopic surgery, your surgeon will make a small incision on your abdomen (belly). They will put a laparoscope through the incision. The laparoscope is a long, thin tool with a video camera. It lets your surgeon see inside your body.

Your surgeon may also put long, skinny surgery tools into other small cuts on your abdomen. They can use the tools to remove pancreatic cysts, tumors, and all or part of the gland. They may also reconstruct (rebuild) the digestive system during this procedure.

With a laparoscopic surgery, your surgeon directly controls the surgical tools with their hands. They can see the images from the laparoscope on a monitor.

Robot-assisted laparoscopic surgery

With a robot-assisted surgery, your surgeon uses the da Vinci[®] Surgical System. They sit at a console and control a robot that moves the surgical tools. There are hand, finger, and foot controls. The console has a special monitor where they can see the images from the laparoscope in 3D.

Robot-assisted surgery can help your surgeon be more accurate than other minimally invasive methods. MSK's operating rooms have the latest technology, including 9 robotic platforms.

Benefits of minimally invasive pancreatic cancer surgery

Minimally invasive surgery is a better option for some people than regular surgery. Benefits include:

- Loss of less blood.
- A shorter hospital stay.
- A faster recovery.

Pancreatic Cancer Surgery FAQs

When is pancreatic cancer surgery the best treatment option?

It's for tumors that are only in the pancreas. They have not spread and grown into blood vessels (arteries and veins). MSK experts will [diagnose pancreatic cancer](#) and whether it has spread.

It's for a tumor that surgery can completely remove.

It's for precancerous lesions in the pancreas.

When is surgery not an option for pancreatic cancer?

Many people have tumors that cannot be operated on by the time they learn they have pancreatic cancer. The tumors already have spread to other areas because the cancer is diagnosed at such a late stage.

MSK experts will not recommend surgery or other procedures if they decide there are few benefits compared with side effects.

Does MSK combine surgery with another pancreatic cancer treatment?

Before [treatment](#) starts, your care team will talk with you about your best treatment options. You may talk with your surgeon, medical oncologist (cancer doctors), and radiation oncologist (doctor who treats cancer with radiation).

You may have chemotherapy or radiation therapy before surgery to shrink a tumor. This method is called neoadjuvant (NEE-oh-A-joo-vant) therapy. Neoadjuvant means treatment before surgery. It can make surgery safer.

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