Esophageal Cancer: What You Should Know

What is the esophagus?
It is the tube that connects your mouth to your stomach. Food goes through this tube on the way to your stomach.

What are the symptoms of esophageal cancer?
Symptoms include pain with swallowing. Food may get stuck on the way down to your stomach. You may lose weight without trying. You may have heartburn even if you take acid blocker pills.

How is it diagnosed?
It is diagnosed with endoscopy. The doctor passes a thin flexible tube through your esophagus to see if there is a cancer. This takes about 15 minutes. You will be sedated and sleepy. If cancer is found, more tests will be needed to see if the cancer has spread.

How is it treated?
Treatment depends on whether the cancer has spread. If it has not spread beyond the esophagus, it is usually treated with surgery. If it has spread, but just nearby the esophagus, treatment is a combination of surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation. If it has spread to other parts of the body, the cancer usually cannot be cured. But, your doctor can give you treatments to ease pain and help you to feel better.

Where can I get more information?
Your doctor
American Cancer Society
http://www.cancer.org/cancer/esophaguscancer/
Cancer.Net
http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/esophageal-cancer
National Cancer Institute
http://www.cancer.gov/types/esophageal
National Library of Medicine

January 2017