

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

<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/esophagealcancer.html>

January 2017

This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

This information provides a general overview and may not apply to everyone. Talk to your family doctor to find out if this information applies to you and to get more information on this subject. Copyright © 2017 American Academy of Family Physicians. Individuals may photocopy this material for their own personal reference, and physicians may photocopy for use with their own patients. Written permission is required for all other uses, including electronic uses.



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS