



Debbie's Dream Foundation: Curing Stomach Cancer Common Terms Used

Acute: Refers to symptoms that start and worsen quickly but do not last over a long time.

Adjuvant therapy: Treatment given after the main treatment to reduce the chance of cancer coming back by destroying any remaining cancer cells. It usually refers to chemotherapy, radiation therapy, hormone therapy, and/or immunotherapy given after surgery.

Benign: Refers to a tumor that is not cancerous. The tumor does not usually invade nearby tissue or spread to other parts of the body.

Biopsy: The removal of a small amount of tissue for examination under a microscope. Other tests can suggest that cancer is present, but only a biopsy can make a definite diagnosis.

Bone marrow: The soft, spongy tissue found in the center of large bones where blood cells are formed.

Bone marrow transplant: A medical procedure in which diseased bone marrow is replaced by healthy bone marrow from a volunteer donor.

Cancer: A group of more than 100 different diseases that can begin almost anywhere in the body, characterized by abnormal cell growth and the ability to invade nearby tissues

Carcinoma: Cancer that starts in skin or tissues that line the inside or cover the outside of internal organs.

Cells: The basic units that make up the human body.

Chemoprevention: The use of natural, synthetic (made in a laboratory), or biologic (from a living source) substances to reverse, slow down, or prevent the development of cancer

Chemotherapy: The use of drugs to kill cancer cells.

Chronic: Refers to a disease or condition that persists, often slowly, over a long time.

Clinical trial: A research study that tests new treatments and/or prevention methods to find out whether they are safe, effective, and possibly better than the current standard of care (the best known treatment).

Complementary medicine: A diverse group of treatments, techniques, and products that are used in addition to standard cancer treatments.

Cure: To fully restore health. This term is sometimes used when a person's cancer has not returned for at least five years after treatment. However, the concept of "cure" is difficult to apply to cancer because undetected cancer cells can sometimes remain in the body after treatment, causing the cancer to return later, called a recurrence. Recurrence after five years is still possible.

Disease-free survival (DFS): The measure of time after treatment during which no sign of cancer is found. This term can be used for an individual or for a group of people within a study. This term is usually used in the context of scientific research.

Event-free survival (EFS): The measure of time after treatment that a group of people in a clinical trial has not had cancer come back or get worse. This term is also usually used in the context of scientific research.

Follow-Up Care: Medical examinations and tests the doctor recommends after the active treatment period. This care is used to monitor a patient's recovery and check for signs of recurrence.

Gastrectomy: A gastrectomy is a medical procedure where all or part of the stomach is surgically removed. There are two types of gastrectomy: *total gastrectomy* – the whole stomach is removed; *partial gastrectomy* – the lower part of the stomach is removed.

Hormone therapy: Treatment that removes, blocks, or adds hormones to destroy or slow the growth of cancer cells. It is also called hormonal therapy or endocrine therapy.

Imaging test: A procedure that creates pictures of internal body parts, tissues, or organs to make a diagnosis, plan treatment, find out whether treatment is working, or observe a disease over time.

Immunotherapy: A type of cancer treatment designed to boost the body's natural defenses to fight the cancer. It uses materials made either by the body or in a laboratory to improve, target, or restore immune system function. It may also be called biologic therapy.

In situ: In place. Refers to cancer that has not spread to nearby tissue, also called non-invasive cancer.

Integrative medicine: A combination of medical treatments for cancer and complementary therapies to help manage the symptoms and side effects of cancer.

Invasive cancer: Cancer that has spread outside the layer of tissue in which it started and has the potential to grow into other tissues or parts of the body, also called infiltrating cancer.

Laboratory test: A procedure that evaluates a sample of blood, urine, or other substance from the body to make a diagnosis, plan treatment, check whether treatment is working, or observe a disease over time.

Late effects: Side effects of cancer treatment that occur months or years after a diagnosis of cancer because of the related treatments, such as chemotherapy, radiation therapy, or surgery.

Leukemia: A cancer of the blood. Leukemia begins when normal white blood cells change and grow uncontrollably.

Localized cancer: Cancer that is confined to the area where it started and has not spread to other parts of the body.

Lymph nodes: Tiny, bean-shaped organs that help fight infection. Part of the lymphatic system.

Lymphatic system: A network of small vessels, ducts, and organs that carry fluid to and from the bloodstream and body tissues. Through the lymphatic system, cancer can spread to other parts of the body.

Lymphoma: A cancer of the lymphatic system. Lymphoma begins when cells in the lymph system change and grow uncontrollably. Sometimes a tumor is formed.

Malignant: Refers to a tumor that is cancerous. It may invade nearby healthy tissue or spread to other parts of the body.

Mass: A lump in the body.

Metastasis: The spread of cancer from the place where the cancer began to another part of the body. Cancer cells can break away from the primary tumor and travel through the blood or the lymphatic system to the lymph nodes, brain, lungs, bones, liver, or other organs.

Neoadjuvant therapy: Treatment given before the main treatment. It may include chemotherapy, radiation therapy, or hormone therapy given before surgery to shrink a tumor so that it is easier to remove.

Oncologist: A doctor who specializes in treating people with cancer. The five main types of oncologists are medical, surgical, radiation, gynecologic, and pediatric oncologists.

Oncology: The study of cancer.

Palliative care: Palliative care is any form of treatment that concentrates on reducing a patient's symptoms or treatment side effects, improving quality of life, and supporting patients and their families. It may also be called supportive care.

Pathologist: A doctor who specializes in interpreting laboratory tests and evaluating cells, tissues, and organs to diagnose disease.

Placebo: An inactive drug or treatment in a clinical trial.

Polyp: A growth of normal tissue that usually sticks out from the lining of an organ, such as the colon.

Precancerous: Refers to cells that have the potential to become cancerous. Also called pre-malignant.

Predisposition: A tendency to develop a disease that can be triggered under certain conditions. For example, although a genetic predisposition to cancer increases a person's risk of developing cancer, it is not certain that the person will develop it. Learn more about genetics.

Primary cancer: Describes the original cancer.

Prognosis: Chance of recovery; a prediction of the outcome of a disease

Progression-free survival (PFS): The length of time during and after treatment that the cancer does not grow or spread further. This term is often used in the context of scientific research.

Protocol: A formal, written action plan for how a clinical trial will be carried out. It states the goals and timeline of the study, who is eligible to participate, what treatments and tests will be given and how often, and what information will be gathered.

Radiation therapy: The use of high-energy x-rays or other particles to destroy cancer cells. The most common type of radiation treatment is called external-beam radiation therapy, which is radiation given from a machine outside the body. When radiation treatment is given using implants near the cancer cells, it is called internal radiation therapy or brachytherapy.

Recurrence: Cancer that has returned after a period during which the cancer could not be detected. "Local recurrence" means that the cancer has come back to the same general area where the original cancer was located. "Regional recurrence" refers to cancer that has come back in the lymph nodes or other tissues near the original cancer site, usually by direct spread. "Distant recurrence" refers to cancer that has come back and has spread to other parts of the body, usually by traveling through the lymph system or bloodstream.

Regimen: A treatment plan that includes expected treatments and procedures, medications and their doses, the schedule of treatments, and how long the treatment will last.

Rehabilitation: Services and resources that help a person with cancer obtain the best physical, social, psychological, and work-related functioning during and after cancer treatment.

Relative survival: The amount of time after treatment that a person with cancer lives, excluding all other causes of death but cancer.

Remission: The disappearance of the signs and symptoms of cancer but not necessarily the entire disease. The disappearance can be temporary or permanent.

Sarcoma: A cancer that develops in the tissues that support and connect the body, such as fat and muscle.

Screening: The process of checking whether a person has a disease or has an increased chance of developing a disease when the person has no symptoms.

Secondary cancer: Describes either a new primary cancer (a different type of cancer) that develops after treatment for the first type of cancer, or cancer that has spread to other parts of the body from the place where it started (see metastasis, above).

Stage: A way of describing cancer, such as where it is located, whether or where it has spread, and whether it is affecting the functions of other organs in the body.

Standard of care: Care that experts agree or guidelines show is the most appropriate and/or effective for a specific type and stage of cancer.

Surgery: The removal of cancerous tissue from the body through an operation.

Survivorship: This term means different things to different people. Two common definitions include having no disease after the completion of treatment and the process of living with, through, and beyond cancer.

Survivorship care plan: A personalized schedule of follow-up examinations and tests that the doctor recommends after a patient's active treatment period ends. This may include regular physical examinations and/or medical tests to monitor the patient's recovery for the coming months and years. It may also be called a follow-up care plan; it is often used in conjunction with a treatment summary (see below).

Targeted treatment: Treatment that targets specific genes, proteins, or other molecules that contribute to cancer growth and survival.

Treatment summary: A written summary of the therapies that the patient had during the active treatment period. This is often used in conjunction with a survivorship care plan (see above) to help monitor a survivor's long-term health.

Tumor: A mass formed when normal cells begin to change and grow uncontrollably. A tumor can be benign (noncancerous) or malignant (cancerous, meaning it can spread to other parts of the body). Also called a nodule or mass.