



WHAT IS STOMACH CANCER?

Stomach cancer forms in tissues lining the stomach. **In 2023, an estimated 26,500 Americans will be diagnosed with stomach cancer, and more than 11,000 will die from the disease.**

Diagnosing Stomach Cancer

Initial diagnosis of stomach cancer often is delayed because up to 80 percent of patients are asymptomatic during early stages.¹ Many symptoms associated with stomach cancer, including indigestion, heartburn, and nausea, are easily mistaken for other gastric problems. Because stomach cancer is often diagnosed at later stages, the result is significant morbidity and high mortality.

Stomach Cancer is a Deadly Cancer

Stomach cancer is, by definition, a recalcitrant cancer.² According to the American Cancer Society, the overall 5-year relative survival rate of people with stomach cancer in the United States is 33 percent.³ **At a late, or distant, stage, the 5-year survival rate is just six percent.**⁴

Alarming Stomach Cancer Trends

Despite marginal gains in stomach cancer survival rates over the past decade, **there has been a worrisome increase in the incidence of stomach cancer in young non-Hispanic White females.**^{5,6} Disease- and treatment-associated morbidity remain major challenges and there are substantial disparities of disease burden across populations.

Stomach Cancer Risk Factors

Helicobacter pylori (*H. pylori*) infection is a primary identified cause of stomach cancer, although it does not explain the recent rise in certain types of stomach cancer.^{7,8} Other risk factors include, but are not limited to, chronic gastritis, certain diets, smoking and a family history. Approximately 10 percent of stomach cancers are associated with one of several hereditary genetic syndromes.⁹

Stomach cancer incidence (2015-2019) and mortality (2016-2020) rates by race.¹⁰

	White	Black	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Hispanic/Latinx
Incidence Male	7.2	13.0	12.2	12.5	11.6
Incidence Female	3.4	7.4	7.2	7.5	7.8
Deaths Male	2.9	7.2	5.9	7.5	5.9
Deaths Female	1.5	3.5	3.7	4.0	3.9

Rates are per 100,000 persons and are age-adjusted to the 2000 U.S. standard population.

¹ Layke JC1, Lopez PP. Gastric cancer: diagnosis and treatment options. Am Fam Physician. 2004 Mar 1;69(5):1133-40. <http://www.aafp.org/afp/2004/0301/p1133.html>

² National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013. Public Law No: 112-239; <https://www.congress.gov/bills/112/congress/house-bill/4310?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%22national+defense+authorization+act+2013%22%7D>

³ American Cancer Society. Cancer Facts & Figures 2023. Atlanta: American Cancer Society; 2023. <https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/research/cancer-facts-and-statistics/annual-cancer-facts-and-figures/2023/2023-cancer-facts-and-figures.pdf>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ National Cancer Institute, Clinical Trials and Translational Research Advisory Committee Gastric & Esophageal Cancers Working Group Report; Nov. 9, 2022. <https://deainfo.nci.nih.gov/advisory/ctac/1122/Goodman-Rustgi2.pdf>

⁶ William F Anderson, Charles S Rabkin, Natalie Turner, Joseph F Fraumeni, Jr, Philip S Rosenberg, M Constanza Camargo, The Changing Face of Noncardia Gastric Cancer Incidence Among US Non-Hispanic Whites, JNCI: Journal of the National Cancer Institute, Volume 110, Issue 6, June 2018, Pages 608-615, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jnci/djx262>

⁷ Program Booklet. Peer Reviewed Cancer Research Program September 2019 <https://cdmnp.army.mil/prcrp/pbks/prcrp2019.pdf>

⁸ Taylor, DN et al. Second International Workshop on Helicobacter pylori Infections in the Developing World: Helicobacter pylori Infection in Desert Storm Troops. Clin Infect Dis. (1997) 25 (5): 979-982 doi:10.1086/516074

⁹ National Cancer Institute, Clinical Trials and Translational Research Advisory Committee Gastric & Esophageal Cancers Working Group Report; Nov. 9, 2022. <https://deainfo.nci.nih.gov/advisory/ctac/1122/Goodman-Rustgi2.pdf>

¹⁰ American Cancer Society. Cancer Facts & Figures 2023. Atlanta: American Cancer Society; 2023. <https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/research/cancer-facts-and-statistics/annual-cancer-facts-and-figures/2023/2023-cancer-facts-and-figures.pdf>