

## RISK FACTORS FOR PANCREATIC CANCER

The exact causes of pancreatic cancer are not yet well understood. Research studies have identified certain risk factors that may increase the likelihood that an individual will develop pancreatic cancer. The following table describes some of the risk factors associated with pancreatic cancer.

Risk Factor	Description
<b>Smoking</b>	Smoking is a significant risk factor and is the cause of about 25% of all pancreatic cancer cases. People who smoke cigarettes are 2 times more likely to develop pancreatic cancer than people who do not smoke.
<b>Age</b>	The chance of developing pancreatic cancer increases with age. Most people diagnosed with pancreatic cancer are over the age of 60.
<b>Family History</b>	If a person's mother, father, sibling, or child had pancreatic cancer, then that person's risk for developing the disease increases by 2-3 times. The risk increases if a greater number of family members are affected. Also, the risk of pancreatic cancer increases if there is a history of familial breast or colon cancer, familial melanoma, or hereditary pancreatitis. Approximately 10% of pancreatic cancer cases are related to a family history of the disease. Individuals who smoke <i>and</i> have a family history of pancreatic cancer are at risk of developing pancreatic cancer up to 10 years earlier than their previously diagnosed family member(s).
<b>Chronic Pancreatitis and Hereditary Pancreatitis</b>	A person who has been diagnosed with chronic pancreatitis, particularly at a younger age, has an increased risk of developing pancreatic cancer. Chronic pancreatitis is usually diagnosed in individuals 35-45 years old and often in individuals who consume large amounts of alcohol for many years. In addition, the mumps virus and various autoimmune disorders can cause chronic pancreatitis, which may lead to pancreatic cancer.
<b>Race (Ethnicity)</b>	African-Americans have a higher incidence of pancreatic cancer compared to individuals of Asian, Hispanic or Caucasian descent. There is also a higher incidence of pancreatic cancer among Ashkenazi Jews, possibly due to a mutation involving the breast cancer (BRCA2) gene that is found in about 1% of individuals of this background.
<b>Gender</b>	Slightly more men are diagnosed with pancreatic cancer than women. This may be linked to higher smoking rates in men. With increasing smoking rates in women, the incidence of pancreatic cancer in women may soon equal that in men.
<b>Diabetes</b>	Pancreatic cancer is 2 times more likely to occur in people who have diabetes than in people who do not have diabetes. In pancreatic cancer patients who have had diabetes for less than five years, it is unclear if the diabetes contributed to the cancer or if the precancerous cells caused the diabetes.
<b>Diet</b>	The association of diet and the development of pancreatic cancer is still unclear. A diet high in red meats, animal fats, processed meats, and carbohydrates is thought to increase the risk of developing pancreatic cancer. A diet high in fruits and vegetables may decrease the risk. There may also be a risk associated with eating meats that are very well-cooked, especially those that are charred, foods that are high in salt and refined sugar, or foods that have been smoked, dehydrated or fried.
<b>Obesity</b>	For people who are considered clinically obese, there may be a significantly increased risk of developing pancreatic cancer. In those who are overweight, the risk may decrease with increased physical activity.
<b>Physical inactivity</b>	Lack of physical activity or exercise has been associated with increased risk of pancreatic cancer in a large epidemiologic study. This is independent of the effects of obesity, as obese patients who exercise regularly have a lower risk than those who do not.

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