

Dictionary of Terms Related to Cancer

*This dictionary will be added to regularly; any terms not bolded will be defined soon.
If you have a term you do not understand, please send it to us for research and addition.*

Abdomen. The part of the body containing the digestive organs; the belly; bounded by the diaphragm and the pelvis.

Abdominal. Pertaining to the abdomen.

Abdominal cavity.

Acetabulum.

Adenocarcinoma. A malignant tumor formed from glandular structures in epithelial tissue, i.e. a cancer that starts in glandular tissues that make mucus or fluid, such as the lung, breast, prostate, or colon. Adenocarcinomas are considered a specific type (subtype) of carcinomas (see carcinoma).

Adrenal gland.

Alimentary canal. See gastrointestinal tube.

Alimentary tube. See Gastrointestinal tract.

Anatomic correlation.

Anterior.

Aorta.

Aortic. Pertaining to the aorta.

Attenuation correction.

Axial.

Axial plane.

Axillary.

Bariatric (bed, diapers, etc.).

Barium x-ray.

Barrett's esophagitis.

Basal cells. Cells are in the lower part of the epidermis, called the basal cell layer; these constantly divide to form new cells to replace the squamous cells that wear off the skin's surface.

Benign. Not harmful.

Bile. A bitter greenish-brown alkaline fluid that aids digestion and is secreted by the liver and stored in the gallbladder.

Bile duct. Any of a number of long tube-like structures that carry bile, required for the digestion of food and secreted by the liver into passages that carry it toward the hepatic duct; the bile duct joins the cystic duct to form the common bile duct which then opens into the intestine.

Bile duct cancer. A cancer that begins in the bile duct, causing jaundice, fever, abdominal pain, sudden weight loss, and itchy skin.

Bile duct obstruction. Blockage of one of the ducts that carry bile from the liver to the intestine via the gallbladder.

Biliary duct. See bile duct.

Biliary duct dilation. See bile duct dilation.

Biliary duct obstruction. See bile duct obstruction.

Biliary system.

Biliary tree.

Biopsy. An examination of tissue removed from a living body to discover the presence, cause, or extent of a disease.

Bile duct. See common bile duct.

Bisphosphonates. A group of drugs that slow bone loss. Administered by soluble powder or IV.

BISREM algorithm.

Bladder.

Bony. Pertaining to bones.

Buried penis. A condition in which the penis is of normal size but is hidden under the skin of the abdomen, thigh, or scrotum (sac beneath the penis that holds the testicles).

Calcification.

Capillaries. **Buried penis.**

Carcinoma. A cancer arising in the epithelial tissue of the skin or of the lining of the internal organs.

Carcinoma *in situ*. A malignant tumor that is localized, i.e. has not spread from its original site.

Cardiovascular disease. A broad term for problems with the heart and blood vessels.

Cartilage. Tough but flexible tissue that is the main type of connective tissue in the body. Around 65–80% of cartilage is water (decreases in older people); the rest is a gel-like substance responsible for form and function.

Cell differentiation. Cellular differentiation is responsible for one daughter cell becoming a sieve tube while the other becomes a companion cell; cell differentiation occurs as different genes are switched on and off. Tumor grade is

Chemo brain. A problem with thinking and memory that can happen during and especially after chemotherapy treatment for cancer.

Chemo fog. See chemo brain; cognitive dysfunction.

Chemotherapy. An aggressive form of chemical drug therapy meant to destroy rapidly growing cells in the body.

Chest wall.

Cholangiocarcinoma. See bile duct cancer.

Cholangitis. See primary biliary cholangitis.

Cirrhosis of the bile duct. See primary biliary cholangitis.

Cirrhosis (of the liver). A degenerative disease of the liver resulting in scarring and liver failure.

Clinical (history, trial, etc.)

Cognitive dysfunction. Loss of intellectual functions such as thinking, remembering, and reasoning of sufficient severity to interfere with daily functioning. Patients with cognitive dysfunction have trouble with verbal recall, basic arithmetic, and concentration.

Cognitive impairment. See cognitive dysfunction.

Colonic. Pertaining to the colon.

Colonoscopy.

Common bile duct. T of the biliary system, a small, tube-like structure formed where the hepatic duct and the cystic duct join; it carries bile from the gallbladder into the upper part of the small intestine.

Comorbidity. The presence of one or more additional conditions often co-occurring with a primary condition. Comorbidity describes the effect of all other conditions an individual patient might have other than the primary condition of interest, and can be physiological or psychological.

Computerized tomography.

Conglomerate.

Coronal.

Coronal plane.

Coronary artery stent. A small, metal mesh tube that expands inside a coronary artery to prevent the artery from closing up again.

Cortical.

Cortical destruction.

CT scan. See computerized tomography.

CTAC dose.

CTDIvol.

Cumulative DLP.

Cystic duct.

Degenerative.

Denosumab. See Xgiva.

Dermatologist. Treats skin problems; also treats less advanced skin cancers.

Dermatological oncologist. Diagnoses and treats skin cancer.

Diaphragm. A sheet of internal skeletal muscle extending across the bottom of the thoracic cavity; the most important muscle of respiration, it separates the thoracic cavity, containing the heart and lungs, from the abdominal cavity: as the diaphragm contracts, the volume of the thoracic cavity increases, creating a negative pressure there, which draws air into the lungs.

Dilated loops of bowel.

Discovery MI PET-CT scanner.

Diverticulosis.

Drug-eluting stent. A stent with medicine embedded to prevent the artery from closing in the long term.

Duct. A vessel for conveying lymph or glandular secretions such as tears or bile.

Duodenum. The upper part of the small intestine.

Durable Medical Equipment (DME).

Endocrine cells. Cells that produce insulin.

Endoscopy. A procedure in which an instrument is introduced into the body to give a view of its internal parts.

Epithelial. Cells that form the epithelium.

Epithelium. The thin tissue forming the outer layer of a body's surface and lining the alimentary canal and other hollow structures.

Esophageal. Pertaining to the esophagus.

Esophageal cancer. A malignant tumor of the esophagus.

Esophagitis. Irritation of the esophagus; see also Barrett's Esophagitis.

Esophagus. The relatively straight muscular tube through which food passes from the pharynx to the stomach, contracting or expanding to allow for the passage of food, located behind the trachea and heart and in front of the spinal column.

Etiology. The cause or reason for something (here; the cause or reason for the cancer or one of the related symptoms).

Exocrine cells. Cells that make digestive juices.

Extensile. Capable of being extended or protruded.

External beam therapy. See external radiation.

External radiation. Sends precisely high levels of radiation direct to cancer cells.

Fat.

FDG avidity.

Fluorodeoxyglucose.

Foley catheter.

Fracture.

Gallbladder.

Gastric.

Gastroesophageal junction.

Gastrointestinal tract. Passage along which food passes through the body from mouth to anus; includes esophagus, stomach, intestines.

Genetic testing.

Gout.

Gray matter.

Hemangioma.

Hemorrhage.

Hepatic. Pertaining to the liver.

Hepatic artery.

Hepatic cyst.

Hepatic duct.

Hepatitis. Inflammation of the liver.

Hidden penis. See buried penis.

Hilar.

Holistic doctor.

Hospice. A facility (or home) providing care for the terminally ill.

Hoyer lift.

Hypercalcemia. High levels of calcium in the blood.

Hypermetabolic.

Hypodense lesions. A deformity in the liver tissue that appears less dense than the surrounding tissue in radiological scans, indicating one of several conditions: hemangioma, benign/malignant lesions, lipoma, liver abscesses, or simple hepatic cysts.

Iliac. Relating to or located on or near the ilium.

Iliac arteries. Blood vessels that provide blood to the legs, pelvis, reproductive organs and other organs in the pelvic area.

Ilium. The largest of three bones that fuse together over time to comprise the outer sections of the pelvis.

Image guided biopsy.

Immunotherapy. A type of therapy that uses substances to stimulate or suppress the immune system to help the body fight cancer, infection, and other diseases.

Inferiorly.

Infusion.

Injection.

In situ. In location; in place; inserted.

Internal medicine. The study, diagnosis, and treatment of conditions that affect the internal organs, e.g., heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, obesity, and lung disease.

Internist. A specialist in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diseases that affect the internal organs; often cares for people with complex, chronic, and multisystem disorders.

Intestine.

Ischium.

IV contrast.

Jaundice. Yellow discoloration of the skin, eyes, and urine.

Lasix.

Lesion.

Lipoma.

Liver.

Liver abscess.

Lobe.

Lucency. An area of low density, hence appearing black in color, appearing in a tissue that is supposed to be radiopaque (white in color); associated with cysts, cancer, benign tumors, infection, or fractures.

Lymph node.

Lymphadenopathy.

Lymphoma.

Lytic lesion.

Magnetic resonance imaging.

Malignant. Very virulent, infectious, tending to invade normal tissue or to recur after removal; cancerous.

Malignant pleural effusion. A condition in which cancer causes an abnormal amount of fluid to collect between the thin layers of tissue (pleura) lining the outside of the lung and the wall of the chest cavity. Most common with lung cancer and breast cancer.

Mammogram.

Mediastinal.

Medical oncologist. Treats cancer, using medicine: chemotherapy, immunotherapy, targeted therapy.

Metastatic. Caused by metastasis.

Metastasis. In metastasis, cancer cells break away from where they first formed (primary cancer), travel through the blood or lymph system, and form new tumors (metastatic tumors) in other parts of the body. The metastatic tumor is the same type of cancer as the primary tumor.

Mitochondria.

Mohs surgeon. Performs Mohs surgery.

Mohs surgery. A special type of procedure that involves removing thin pieces of skin and examining each of them under a microscope before another layer is removed until a layer of skin is reached in which there are no cancerous cells in evidence.

MRI. See magnetic resonance imaging.

Musculoskeletal.

Neuropathy. Can be a side effect of some forms of chemotherapy.

Nondependent gas.

Nurse Practitioner. Nurses with a master's or doctoral degree who work with doctors on diagnosis and patient care.

Oncologist. Doctor who treats cancer.

Oral contrast.

OSEM algorithm.

Osseous. Pertaining to the bone.

Osseous metastatic disease. Primary tumor invasion into the bone.

Oxygen consumption.

Palia. See X-geva.

Palliative (treatment/drugs/surgery, etc.). Meant to provide relief but not cure.

Pancreas. Organ that makes juices to digest food, insulin, and hormones to regulate blood sugar.M

Pancreatectomy, distal. Removal of the head and tail of the pancreas, along with the spleen.

Pancreatectomy, total. Removal of the entire pancreas, part of the small intestine and stomach, common bile duct, spleen, and some lymph nodes.

Paraneoplastic Syndrome. Signs and symptoms caused indirectly by substances produced by a tumor or as part of an immune response to it, such as night sweats, fever, and loss of appetite.

Parenchyma.

Patent. (vasculature patent)

Pathologic fracture.

Pathologist. Examines samples of tissue or body fluids to rule in/out cancer; determines type and stage of cancer.

Pelvis.

Pericardial effusion.

Pericaval lymph nodes.

Peritoneal. Pertaining to the stomach cavity.

Peritonitis.

PET scan.

Phantom. (CTDI vol)

Physician Assistant. Certified and licensed medical professional with a master's or doctoral degree.

Plasma glucose.

Plastic surgeon. Performs plastic surgery.

Plastic surgery. Repair and reconstruction of skin and other parts of the body.

Pleura. Thin membrane surrounding the lung.

Pleural effusion. An excessive collection of fluid in the pleural cavity, the fluid-filled space that surrounds the lungs.

Poorly differentiated (cells). Malignant cells that bear minimal resemblance to the cell from which they arose. See also cell differentiation.

Port.

Portal caval lymph nodes.

Portal vein.

Posterior.

Primary (cancer/tumor).

Primary biliary cholangitis. A chronic condition that causes progressive destruction of the bile ducts in the liver.

Primary biliary cirrhosis. (See primary biliary cholangitis.)

Prolia. See Xgeva.

Prostate.

Proton beam radiation. Utilizing pencil beam scanning, proton beams deliver targeted radiation that is only a few millimeters wide.

Proton therapy. See Proton beam radiation.

Pubic.

Pulmonary artery.

Pulmonary nodule.

Radiation oncologist. Treats cancer, using radiation therapy.

Radiation therapy.

Radiologist. Reviews imaging scans, determines cancer spread, and monitors response to treatment.

Random distribution.

RCA stent. Right coronary artery stent; see coronary stent.

Respiration.

Sagittal plane. Longitudinal/anatomical plane that divides the body into left and right divisions.

Sarcoma. Cancer growing in connective tissue like bones, nerves, muscles, tendons, cartilage and blood vessels of the arms and legs, causing abdominal pain, lump, bone pain, and weight loss.

Scapula. Shoulder blade.

Seminal vesicles.

Sclerosis.

Sclerotic margin.

Skeletal muscle.

Small intestine.

Soft tissue.

Soft tissue components.

Squamous cells. Flat cells in the outer part of the epidermis that are constantly shed as new ones form.

Stent. See coronary artery stent.

Spleen.

Stenosis. Narrowing or restriction of a blood vessel or valve that reduces blood flow.

Subtle lesion.

Supraclavicular.

Surgical oncologist. Removes tumors and tissue, performs biopsies.

SUVMax. Maximized standard uptake value.

Targeted therapy.

Thoracic. Pertaining to the thorax.

Thoracic cavity.

Thoracic diaphragm. See diaphragm.

Thorax.

Tumor.

Uptake.

Vasculature.

Vertebra.

Vertebral. Pertaining to the vertebra.

Vertebral body.

Visualized.

Whipple procedure. Removal of the head of the pancreas, part of the small intestine, the gall bladder, part of the stomach and lymph nodes near the head of the pancreas.

Xgeva (Denosumab/Prolia). Treats bone problems in people with multiple myeloma or cancer that has spread to the bones. Also treats high blood calcium levels (hypercalcemia) that may occur with cancer. May also be used by adults (and teenagers who have reached final adult height) to treat giant cell tumor of the bone, if they cannot use surgery to treat the disease.

*For a broader discussion of the topics related to the terms in this dictionary,
refer to Carl's Cancer Compendium, www.msipress.com/ccc/,
which discusses cancer types, longevity, treatments, references, research, and resources.*