

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.

Acetabulum.

Adenocarcinoma. A malignant tumor formed from glandular structures in epithelial tissue.

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.).

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.

Biliary duct.

Biliary duct dilation.

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.

Calcification.

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.

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.

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

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.

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 that produce insulin.

Endoscopy.

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.

Etiology.

Exocrine. Cells make digestive juices.

Extensile.

External beam therapy. See external radiation.

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

FDG avidity.

Fluorodeoxyglucose.

Foley catheter.

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.

Hepatic. Pertaining to the liver.

Hepatic duct.

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.

Iliac.

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.

Internist.

Ischium.

IV contrast.

Lasix.

Lesion.

Lobe.

Lucency.

Lymph node.

Lymphadenopathy.

Lytic lesion.

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.

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.

Musculoskeletal.

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.

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.

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.

Posterior.

Primary (cancer/tumor).

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.

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.

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.

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 definition of cancer types and for discussion of the topics related to the terms in this dictionary, refer to Carl's Cancer Compendium, www.msipress.com/ccc/, where they are described, along with longevity expectations, treatments, and references to research.