



SEARCH

Conditions

Treatments

Patient Information

About Us

Research and Clinical Trials

Fellowships

News

## Overview

## Cancerous Liver Tumors

- Overview
- Liver Cancer (Hepatocellular Carcinoma)
- Colorectal Cancer that has Spread to the Liver
- Neuroendocrine/Carcinoid Tumors

Select Metastases from  
Cancers of Other Organs

## Benign Tumors and Cysts

## Bile Duct

## Cancer/Cholangiocarcinoma

## Gallbladder Cancer

## Hepatitis and Other Liver Diseases

## Undiagnosed Liver Masses

FONT SIZE



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[Home](#) > [Liver Tumor Center](#) > [Conditions](#) > [Cancerous Liver Tumors](#)

## Other Liver Metastases

Cancerous tumors in the liver often occur because the patient has another type of cancer that has spread to the liver. This is called secondary liver cancer, or liver metastasis, and it's actually more common than primary liver cancer (which originates in the liver).

Cancers that can spread to the liver include:

- [Breast cancer](#)
- [Melanoma](#)
- Squamous cell carcinoma of the anus
- Sarcoma

### What can be done for patients with liver metastases?

The management of patients with liver metastases is very complicated and must be individualized for each patient. Patients who have this situation have Stage IV disease and frequently need to be treated with [chemotherapy](#) first. In a select group of patients, however, surgical removal of the cancer that has spread to the liver may be appropriate and potentially offer a chance at a cure.

### What are the symptoms of liver metastasis?

Frequently patients will not have symptoms from the spread of disease to their liver. Patients may, however, have symptoms based on where the original tumor is located.

### How are patients with liver metastases diagnosed?

When you see your physician, you will have a routine examination. Your doctor will ask you questions about your general health and your family history of cancer and liver disease. You will also be asked about your lifestyle and habits, including drinking and smoking.

Your physician may order the following tests:

- **Blood work.** Blood tests may include a complete blood count, hematocrit, platelet count, liver function tests.
- **CT scan.** This test identifies the tumor(s) and pinpoints their size and location in the liver, as well as their relation to the vascular / biliary structures. It also helps the doctor to determine the overall health of the liver.
- **MRI.** This test identifies the tumor(s) and pinpoints their size and location in the liver, as well as their relation to the vascular / biliary structures. It also helps the doctor to determine the overall health of the liver. A doctor will determine whether to do a CT scan, an MRI or both.
- **PET scan.** This is a whole body scan that looks for evidence of active cancer throughout the body.
- **Liver biopsy.** A biopsy is the removal of a small amount of tissue for examination under a microscope. The sample removed from the biopsy is analyzed by one of [our expert](#) pathologists. Depending on the size of the tumor or mass, your physician may recommend the biopsy be taken one of several ways:
  - By using a minimally invasive surgical technique known as laparoscopy
  - By fine needle or thick needle aspiration (a core biopsy), using a computed tomography (CT or CAT) scan or ultrasound to guide the needle placement.

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- o Through an endoscope (a thin, lighted, flexible tube) inserted in the mouth, passed through the stomach, and into the first part of the intestine. A tool can be passed from the endoscope through the intestinal wall to remove a sample of tissue.

## What is the treatment for metastatic liver cancer?

Cancers that have spread to the liver may be treated with a combination of the following:

- [Surgery](#) to remove the tumor(s). At our Center, our surgeons perform both traditional, open surgeries, as well as minimally-invasive laparoscopic surgeries.
- [Ablative techniques](#). This may involve either a surgery or may be done as a procedure in radiology.
- [Intra-arterial therapies](#)
- [Chemotherapy](#)

## What is the prognosis for metastatic liver cancer?

Your team of physicians will create an individualized treatment plan for you.

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