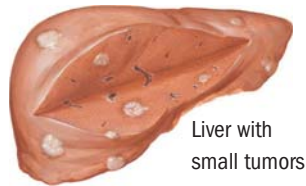
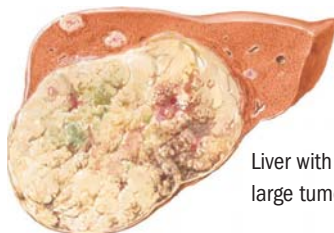


MANAGING YOUR LIVER CANCER

Hepatoma is the most common cancer of the liver. In the United States, about 6000 new cases are diagnosed each year. Hepatomas are more common in men than women, usually occurring in people 50 to 70 years old.



Liver with small tumors



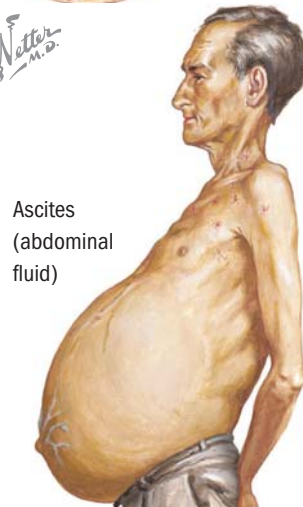
Liver with large tumor

Symptoms include:



Abdominal pain

F. Netter M.D.



Ascites (abdominal fluid)



Jaundice



Liver biopsy

Diagnosis is hard because hepatomas don't have many early symptoms. To help diagnosis, your doctor can do blood tests, ultrasound, CT, MRI, and liver biopsy.



Blood test



CAT scan

What Is Liver Cancer?

Hepatoma (also called hepatocellular carcinoma) is the most common cancer of the liver. It's a primary tumor, meaning the tumor started growing in the liver and did not spread from someplace else in the body.

In the United States, about 6000 new cases occur each year. Hepatomas are more common in men than women, usually occurring in people 50 to 70 years old. Unfortunately, many hepatomas are found late. Early diagnosis gives the best hope for cure.

What Causes Liver Cancer?

Hepatoma occurs most often in people with cirrhosis (liver scarring), chronic hepatitis B, or chronic hepatitis C or after severe liver damage from chronic alcohol abuse. Hepatomas aren't contagious or passed from parents to children.

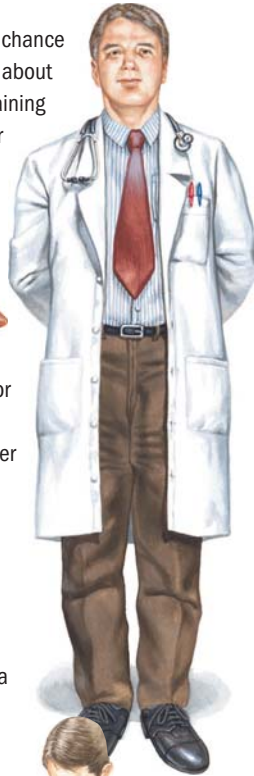
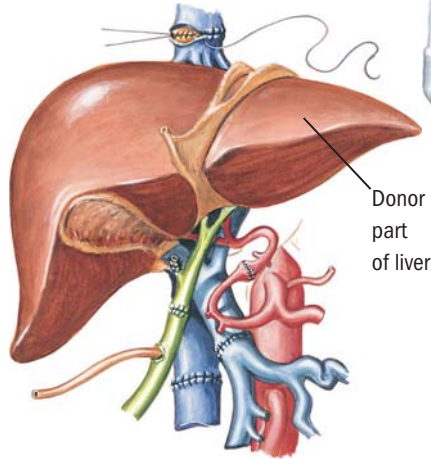
What Are the Symptoms of Liver Cancer?

One third of people do not have any symptoms. Symptoms may include pain in the abdomen (belly), an abdominal mass, abdominal fluid (ascites), and jaundice (yellow skin color). Later, weakness, loss of appetite, weight loss, and fatigue can occur.

How Is Liver Cancer Diagnosed?

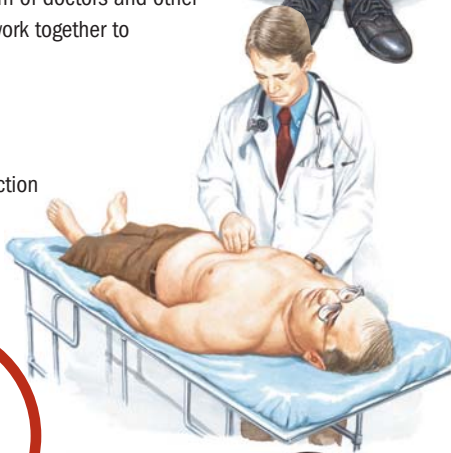
Diagnosis is difficult because hepatomas often don't have many early symptoms. To help diagnosis, the doctor may initially do blood tests called alpha-fetoprotein and liver function tests for people with cirrhosis or hepatitis B or C. However, these tests are not diagnostic because not everyone with a hepatoma has abnormal blood tests, so the doctor may want imaging studies called ultrasound, computed tomography (CT), or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). If these imaging studies show a probable tumor, a liver biopsy will be done. In a biopsy, liver tissue is taken with a needle and looked at with a microscope.

Surgery to remove the tumor offers the best chance for cure. Smaller tumors (less than 5 cm, or about 2 inches) that haven't spread and with remaining liver working well are less likely to recur after surgery.

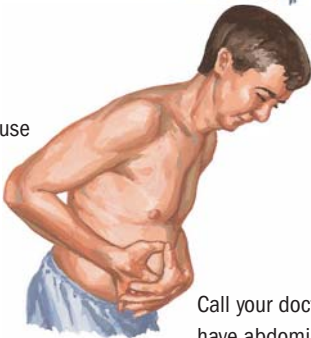


People with too much liver damage may get a liver transplant. A team of doctors and other health care workers work together to manage care.

Remember, early detection offers the best chance for cure so always get regular checkups.



Don't drink alcohol. Alcohol abuse can lead to liver cirrhosis and increase the risk of hepatoma.



Call your doctor if you have abdominal pain.

How Is Liver Cancer Treated?

Untreated people have a rapid downhill course. Surgery offers the best chance for cure, but most people cannot have surgery because of cirrhosis or tumor spread. Smaller tumors (less than 5 cm, or about 2 inches) that haven't spread and with remaining liver working well are less likely to recur after surgery.

People who cannot have surgery may have other treatments, including injecting chemotherapy drugs into the artery that feeds the tumor or injecting ethanol (alcohol) directly into the tumor to destroy it.

People with very large tumors or with too much liver damage may be candidates for liver transplantation. A team of doctors and other health care workers must work together to manage care.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Liver Cancer:

- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you have abdominal pain or vomit blood.
- ✓ **DO** tell your doctor if you have a drinking problem.
- ✓ **DO** tell your doctor if you feel a mass or large lump in the right upper part of your abdomen (belly).
- ⊗ **DON'T** drink alcohol. Alcohol abuse can lead to cirrhosis and increase the risk of hepatoma.
- ⊗ **DON'T** miss follow-up doctor appointments.

FROM THE DESK OF

NOTES

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following sources:

- American Liver Foundation
Tel: (800) 223-0179
Website: <http://www.liverfoundation.org>
- American Cancer Society
Tel: (800) 227-2345
Website: <http://www.cancer.org>
- National Cancer Institute Cancer Information Service
Tel: (800) 422-6237
Website: <http://www.cancer.gov>