

UNDERSTANDING EARLY STAGE HEPATOCELLULAR CARCINOMA

WHAT IS THE LIVER?

The liver is the largest organ in the human body, after the skin. It is football-sized and sits in the upper right part of the abdomen, beneath the diaphragm and above the stomach. The liver has more than 500 jobs such as:

- Processing and storing nutrients
- Removing waste from blood
- Filtering and detoxifying chemicals



WHAT IS EARLY STAGE HEPATOCELLULAR CARCINOMA?

Hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) is cancer that develops in the hepatocytes of the liver. Hepatocytes are the main liver cells and do most of the work for the liver to keep the body healthy.

HCC is a complex disease and frequently occurs in the context of another liver disease. Once HCC has been diagnosed, the healthcare team determines the location of the cancer in the liver and to what extent, if any, the disease has spread, using a process called staging. Treatment is recommended based on the location of the cancer in the liver. Each liver cancer is different, and it is important to work with a multidisciplinary team to create a treatment plan that is unique to each individual's needs.

There are many different staging systems. Two commonly used systems in the U.S. include Tumor Node Metastasis (TNM) and Barcelona Clinic Liver Cancer (BCLC).

Early stage HCC generally refers to cancer that is located in the liver and can be treated or managed with surgery or transplant. For people with very early stage HCC, ablation and resection may be considered.

TREATMENT CONSIDERATIONS FOR EARLY STAGE HCC

Types of surgery that remove the cancer include:

- Resection or Partial Hepatectomy - surgery to remove the part of the liver with cancerous tumor(s)
- Liver Transplant - surgery to remove a person's liver and replace with a donated liver

If a person is healthy enough for surgery, these cancers can be completely removed by surgery or treated with a liver transplant.

If a liver transplant is an option, bridging therapy may be used while waiting for the transplant to control the spread of the cancer. Bridging therapy may include ablation, embolization, radiation therapy, or systemic therapy.

Talk to your doctor to find out if you are eligible for a clinical trial.

If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with HCC, this can be an overwhelming and difficult time. Remember you are not alone. GLI is here and available to provide you with resources, information, and support.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

THE DOCTOR

- What is your experience treating liver cancer?
- How many patients like me (of the same age, gender, race) have you treated?
- Will you be consulting with experts to discuss my care? Whom will you consult?

GENERAL

- What is my diagnosis?
- Where is the cancer in my liver? Is it anywhere else in my body?
- How healthy is my liver?
- Who can help me gather my records for a second opinion?

ABOUT TREATMENT

- What are all of my treatment options?
- Am I eligible for a clinical trial?
- What treatment do you recommend and why?
- If I am not able to have the recommended treatment, what happens? What does that mean for me and my future health?
- What will followup from treatment look like?
- Will this treatment cure the HCC?

ABOUT SUPPORT

- Are there support groups for me and my family?
- How can your hospital/office help me manage the costs of cancer care?
- What groups can I connect with for more resources?

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