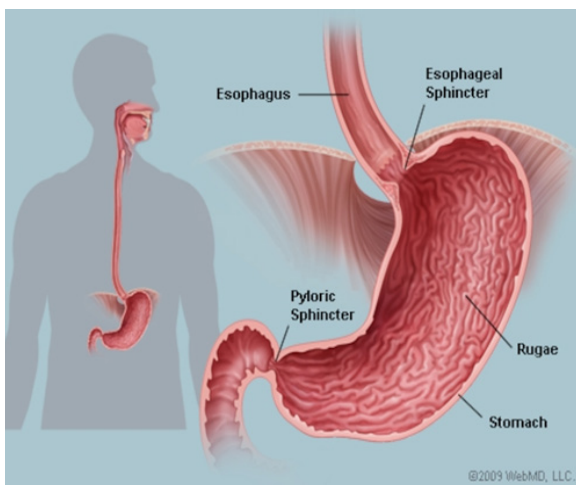


STOMACH CANCER

Stomach Cancer

There are four main types of stomach cancer including adenocarcinoma, lymphoma, sarcomas, and carcinoid tumors. Stomach cancer usually begins in the mucus-producing cells that line the stomach. This type of cancer is adenocarcinoma. For the past several decades, rates of cancer in the main part of the stomach (stomach body) have been falling worldwide. During the same period, cancer in the area where the top part of the stomach (cardia) meets the lower end of the swallowing tube (esophagus) has become much more common. This area of the stomach is called the gastroesophageal junction.



Anatomy of the Stomach

When people think of the stomach, they often refer to it as the abdomen, or the area from the hips to the top of the chest. Medically speaking the word “stomach” only refers the organ, which is a pear-shaped enlargement of the alimentary canal linking the esophagus to the small intestine. The stomach organ sits in the upper abdomen, under the ribs, and is where the majority of the digestion process of food occurs. After chewing and swallowing food it moves through the hollow tube called the esophagus, and then into the stomach. The stomach mixes the food with gastric juices and begins the digestion process where muscles in the stomach wall create a rippling motion (peristalsis) that mixes and mashes the food.

Causes and Risk Factors

Age is a factor in stomach cancer and found most often in people over age 55. Gender also plays a role with this disease, affecting twice as many men as women. Stomach cancer is also more common in African Americans than in Whites. Genetics also plays a role, since many times stomach cancer runs in families. A genetic test can determine if you carry certain genes that make you more susceptible to stomach cancer, including the CDH1 gene and Lynch syndrome. Stomach cancer is more prevalent in different parts of the world, such as Japan, Korea, parts of Eastern Europe and Latin America. The people in these geographic locations eat many foods that are preserved by drying, smoking, salting and pickling, which is believed to play a role in developing this disease.

Signs and Symptoms

Signs and symptoms of gastroesophageal junction cancer and stomach cancer may include:

- Fatigue
- Feeling bloated after eating
- Feeling full after eating small amounts of food
- Severe, persistent heartburn
- Severe indigestion that is always present
- Unexplained, persistent nausea
- Stomach pain
- Persistent vomiting
- Unintentional weight loss

Figure 1 | Stomach Cancer Incidence Rate by Race, VA 2006-2015

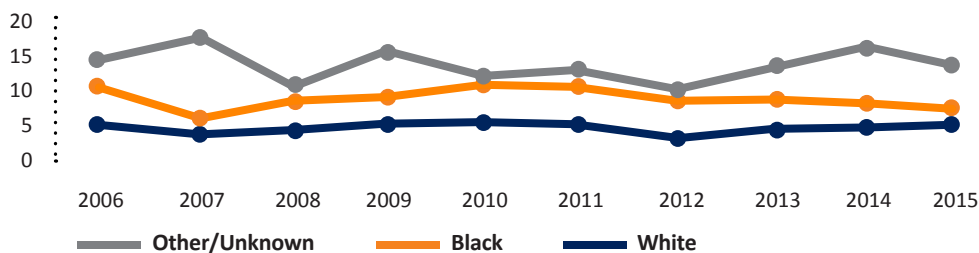
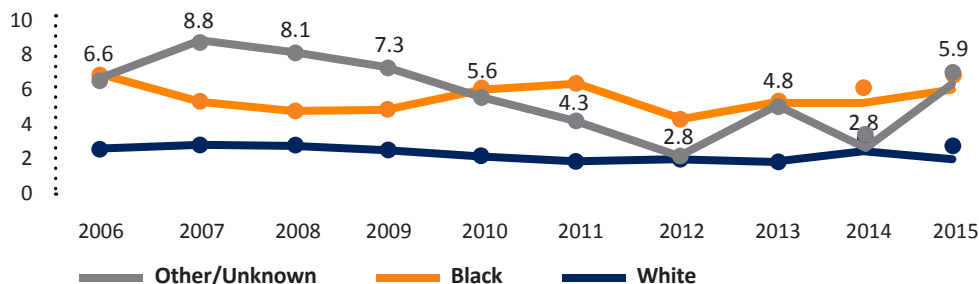


Figure 2 | Stomach Cancer Mortality Rate by Race, VA 2006-2015



Treatment

Depending on how far cancer has spread, surgery is often performed to remove the part of the esophagus or stomach where the tumor is located. The purpose of surgery is to remove as much of the cancer as possible and a margin of surrounding nearby healthy tissue. Local lymph nodes are usually removed as well. Radiation therapy is often used before surgery (neoadjuvant radiation) to shrink a tumor allowing it to be more easily removed. Radiation is also used after surgery (adjuvant radiation) to kill any cancer cells that might remain in the area around the esophagus or stomach.

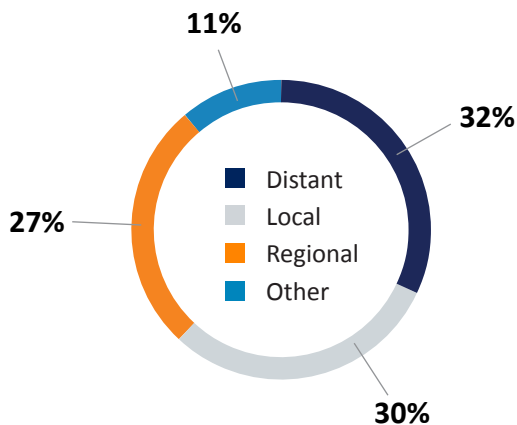


Figure 3
Incident Counts for Stomach Cancer
by Diagnosis Stage, VA 2011-2015

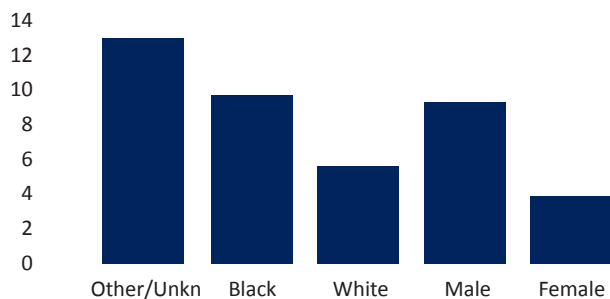


Figure 4
Incident Counts for Stomach Cancer by Gender and Race,
VA 2011-2015

Prevention

There is never any guarantee of preventing stomach cancer but there are several steps that can be taken to reduce the risk. First and foremost is a healthy diet, you are what you eat! A diet rich in fruits and vegetables is thought to have a positive effect on preventing stomach cancers. Staying away from smoke and alcohol is also very important. Studies show that living an unhealthy lifestyle is directly related to certain types of cancers, including stomach cancer. Keep stomach ulcers in check. Helicobacter pylori (H. pylori) is a common bacterium. It does not always cause people to get sick, but it can lead to infections of the stomach lining and cause ulcers. H. pylori is also a carcinogen, which means it can cause cancer. Keeping the weight off is also beneficial. Regular diet and exercise help to prevent obesity, which is also thought to cause cancer. Monitoring aspirin and other medications is also important. Many over the counter and prescribed medications can irritate the stomach, and if used over a long period, can be detrimental to one's health. Finally, genetic testing is a wise choice for those people that stomach cancer runs in the family. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!

Resources:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/stomach-cancer/symptoms-causes/syc-20352438>
<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/stomach-cancer/causes-risks-prevention/what-causes.html>
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/stomach-cancer/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20352443>
<https://www.webmd.com/cancer/understanding-stomach-cancer-prevention>
<https://www.webmd.com/digestive-disorders/picture-of-the-stomach#1>