

Bile Duct Cancer - Risk Factors [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 09/2014

ON THIS PAGE: You will find out more about the factors that increase the chance of developing this type of cancer. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen.

A risk factor is anything that increases a person's chance of developing cancer. Although risk factors often influence the development of cancer, most do not directly cause cancer. Some people with several risk factors never develop cancer, while others with no known risk factors do. However, knowing your risk factors and talking about them with your doctor may help you make more informed lifestyle and health care choices.

The following factors may raise a person's risk of developing bile duct cancer:

Previous disease or irritation of the bile duct. Ulcerative colitis or stones similar to gallstones can cause inflammation of the bile duct. Diseases and conditions that increase the risk of bile duct cancer include:

- Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis (PSC), which is a rare inflammatory condition of the bile ducts with no known cause. See the [Statistics](#) [3] section for more information.
- Choledochal cyst, which is an abnormality that a person is born with. It causes a swollen area on the part of the bile duct outside the liver.
- Caroli's syndrome, which is an abnormality of the small bile ducts within the liver that a person is born with. This syndrome increases the risk of infection and stones, like gallstones, forming in the liver.
- Cirrhosis, which is liver disease that can cause scarring or long-lasting irritation.
- Infection with liver flukes that invade the bile duct.

Age. Older adults are more likely to develop bile duct cancer.

Certain chemicals. Dioxins, nitrosamines, and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) may cause bile duct cancer. In particular, people who work in rubber plants and automotive industries may be exposed to these chemicals.

Reducing Your Risk

Research continues to look into what factors cause this type of cancer and what people can do to lower their personal risk. There is no proven way to completely prevent this disease, but there may be steps you can take to lower your individual risk of bile duct cancer.

- Avoid coming in contact with hazardous chemicals. Even though thorium dioxide, a chemical previously used in x-ray examinations, has been banned from use because it is associated with a high risk of developing bile duct cancer, other hazardous chemicals are still available or found in the environment.
- Avoid [alcohol abuse](#) [4], which can lead to cirrhosis.
- Drink only purified water and foods that have been thoroughly cooked if you travel in parts of the world where liver flukes are common.

Talk with your doctor if you have concerns about your personal risk of developing this type of cancer.

To continue reading this guide, use the menu on the side of your screen to select another section.

Links

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/bile-duct-cancer/risk-factors>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/18506>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24981>