

Gallbladder Cancer - Risk Factors [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board \[2\]](#), 08/2015

ON THIS PAGE: You will find out more about the factors that increase the chance of 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 can raise a person's risk of developing gallbladder cancer:

- **Gallstones.** Gallstones are the most common risk factor for gallbladder cancer. These are rock-like formations of cholesterol and bile salts that can occur in the gallbladder or bile duct. Gallstones are the most common digestive disease in the United States, and between 75% and 90% of people with gallbladder cancer have a history of gallstones. However, less than 1% of people with gallstones develop gallbladder cancer.
- **Gallbladder polyps.** This type of polyp is a growth that sometimes forms when small gallstones get embedded in the gallbladder wall. Gallbladder polyps bulge inward from the inner gallbladder wall. Some polyps may also be caused by inflammation. Doctors often recommend gallbladder removal for people who have polyps larger than 1 centimeter because these are more likely to be cancerous.

- **Age.** Most people diagnosed with gallbladder cancer are older than 70.
- **Gender.** Women are about twice as likely to develop gallbladder cancer as men.
- **Ethnicity.** Mexican Americans and Native Americans, particularly in the southwestern United States, are more likely to develop gallbladder cancer than the general population.
- **Smoking [3].** Tobacco use may increase the risk of gallbladder cancer.
- **Family history.** A family history of gallbladder cancer slightly increases a person's risk of developing gallbladder cancer.

The [next section in this guide is Symptoms and Signs \[4\]](#) and it explains what body changes or medical problems this disease can cause. Or, use the menu on the side of your screen to choose another section to continue reading this guide.

Links

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

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

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/28476>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/18859>