

# **The Management Pain and Other Symptoms Associated with Pancreatic Cancer**

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## III Phases of the Disease Process

1. DIAGNOSIS
2. TREATMENT:
  - Surgery
  - Radiation
  - Chemotherapy
3. END OF LIFE

## Symptoms at DIAGNOSIS

- Silent/Vague signs:
  - Fatigue
  - Weakness
  - Early Satiety/Anorexia
  - Metallic/chemical taste

Flu-like discomfort  
Weight loss-unexplained  
Digestive upset:  
    bloating or excess gas after  
    eating

■ Easily noticed symptoms:

Jaundice-yellow colored skin/eyes

Severe itching

Dark urine-tea colored

Light, white, grey stool

New diabetes, or  
difficulty controlling regimen

Abdominal or Back pain

Nausea or Vomiting

Pancreatitis – chronic inflammation

## Symptoms during Treatment

- Surgery:
  - Incisional pain
  - Anorexia
  - Nausea/Vomiting
  - Fatigue/Depression
  - Constipation/Diarrhea
  - Blood Clots
  - Diabetes

- Radiation Therapy

- Skin redness/dryness/itch
- Nausea/Vomiting
- Fatigue
- Anorexia
- Weight Loss

- **Chemotherapy**

Fatigue  
Anorexia  
Hair Loss/Thinning  
Mouth Sores  
Nausea/Vomiting  
Bruising/bleeding  
Infection

## **Symptoms at the End of Life**

- Ascites
- Pain
- Anorexia
- Restlessness/Anxiety
- Constipation
- Blood Clots
- Excess Sweating/Fever
- Breathlessness

## Solutions

The Goal is to minimize or eliminate any symptom in order to improve **an individual's** quality and potential quantity of life.

### ■ Most Common Complaints:

Weight loss/Anorexia

Fatigue

Pain

Nausea

## Solutions

- Fatigue:

- Exercise program

- walking

- light weight lifting

- Use the 5/5 method – walk 5 minutes, rest 5 minutes.

- Medication for boosting “low counts”

## Solutions

### Food and Diet

- Pancreatic Enzymes- solid food

- Graze

- Cool, not smelly

- Plastic and glass pots

- Stove not microwave

- Chew well

- Easily digestible foods

- Food and Diet (cont.)

Increase liquid intake as much as possible

Use whole foods vs processed foods

Use supplement shakes/drinks for added calories and nutrition

- Food and Diet (cont.)

Consider an appetite stimulant such as Megace

Treat constipation or diarrhea aggressively.

Stop eating when full, do not force food.

## Solutions

- Pain Management

Consider: phase of disease?  
cause of pain?  
pain experience so far?  
what has worked?

- Pain Management

### Contributing Factors

Relieve: Jaundice: Stent/Bypass  
Constipation: Stool softener  
Laxatives  
Fatigue: Uninterrupted rest  
Measured exercise

## ■ Pain Management

Medication: lowest dose, lightest drug

Massage: relaxing, safe

Heat/cold: caution during  
radiation/chemotherapy

Integrative therapy

## ■ Nausea

Mechanical vs. Central cause

Condition of bowels

Recent Surgery

- Nausea

Stool softeners

Laxatives

Antiemetics

Massage

- Disease Progression

End of Life

Ascites/Anasarca: diuretic

Blood Clot/Trousseau's: anticoagulant

Fever, sweating: ? Cause, NSAIDS

Breathlessness: ? Cause, Fan

Restlessness: ? Cause

