

Glossary of Terms

You can find terms that are not listed by visiting CancerNet, a service of the National Cancer Institute, at www.cancernet.gov/dictionary.html

- Abdomen** - The area of the body that contains the pancreas, stomach, intestines, liver, gallbladder and other organs.
- Abdominal** - Having to do with the abdomen, which is the part of the body between the chest and the hips that contains the pancreas, stomach, intestines, liver, gallbladder and other organs.
- Abstracting** - Abstracting is the process of entering data on individual patients into the cancer registry database to support the reporting and data analysis functions of the cancer registry.
- Accession number** - Provides a unique identifier for the patient consisting of the year in which the patient was first seen at the reporting facility and the consecutive order in which the patient was abstracted.
- ACOS** - American College of Surgeons - National database used to track and compare the treatment of most types of cancers.
- Acute leukemia** - A rapidly progressing cancer that starts in blood-forming tissue such as the bone marrow, and causes large numbers of white blood cells to be produced and enter the blood stream.
- Acute pain** - Pain that comes on quickly, can be severe, but lasts a relatively short time.
- Acute** - Symptoms or signs that begin and worsen quickly; not chronic.
- Adenocarcinoma** - Cancer that begins in cells that line certain internal organs and that have glandular (secretory) properties.
- Adenoma** - A noncancerous tumor.
- Adjuvant therapy** - Treatment given after the primary treatment to increase the chances of a cure. Adjuvant therapy may include chemotherapy, radiation therapy, hormone therapy or biological therapy.
- Alopecia** - Loss of hair.
- Analgesic** - A drug that reduces pain. Analgesics include aspirin, acetaminophen and ibuprofen.
- Analytic cases** - Include those patients diagnosed but not treated at our facility, diagnosed and treated at our facility, or diagnosed elsewhere but who received all or part of their treatment at our facility.
- Anemia** - A condition in which the number of red blood cells is below normal.
- Anesthesia** - Drugs or substances that cause loss of feeling or awareness. Local anesthetics cause loss of feeling in a part of the body. General anesthetics put the person to sleep.
- Angiogenesis** - Blood vessel formation. Tumor angiogenesis is the growth of blood vessels from surrounding tissue to a solid tumor. This is caused by the release of chemicals by the tumor.
- Anorexia** - An abnormal loss of the appetite for food.
- Antibody** - A type of protein made by certain white blood cells in response to a foreign substance (antigen). Each antibody can bind to only a specific antigen. The purpose of this binding is to help destroy the antigen. Antibodies can work in several ways, depending on the nature of the antigen. Some antibodies destroy antigens directly. Others make it easier for white blood cells to destroy the antigen.
- Antidepressant** - A drug used to treat depression.
- Antiemetic** - A drug that prevents or reduces nausea and vomiting.
- Antifungal** - A drug that treats infections caused by fungi.
- Arteriogram** - An X-ray of arteries; the person receives an injection of a dye that outlines the vessels on an X-ray.
- Ascites** - Abnormal build-up of fluid in the abdomen that may cause swelling. In late-stage cancer, tumor cells may be found in the fluid in the abdomen. Ascites also occurs in patients with liver disease.
- Aspirate** - Fluid withdrawn from a lump (often a cyst) or a nipple.
- Axillary lymph node dissection** - Surgery to remove lymph nodes found in the armpit region. Also called axillary dissection.
- Barium enema** - A procedure in which a liquid with barium in it is put into the rectum and colon by way of the anus. Barium is a silver-white metallic compound that helps to show the image of the lower gastrointestinal tract on an X-ray.
- Barium swallow** - A series of X-rays of the esophagus. The X-ray pictures are taken after the person drinks a solution that contains barium. The barium coats and outlines the esophagus on the X-ray.
- Basal cell carcinoma** - A type of skin cancer that arises from the basal cells, small round cells found in the lower part (or base) of the epidermis, the outer layer of the skin.
- Benign** - Not cancerous. Benign tumors do not spread to tissues around them or to other parts of the body.
- Bilateral cancer** - Cancer that occurs in both paired organs, such as both breasts or both ovaries.
- Biologic response modifiers** - A new class of compounds, such as interferon, produced in the body that fight cancer naturally by stimulating the body's own immune system; also called "immunotherapy."
- Biopsy** - The removal of cells or tissues for examination under a microscope. When only a sample of tissue is removed, the procedure is called an incisional biopsy or core biopsy. When an entire lump or suspicious area is removed, the procedure is called an excisional biopsy. When a sample of tissue or fluid is removed with a needle, the procedure is called a needle biopsy or fine-needle aspiration.

Biotherapy - Treatment to stimulate or restore the ability of the immune system to fight infections and other diseases. Also used to lessen side effects that may be caused by some cancer treatments. Also known as biological therapy, immunotherapy, or biological response modifier (BRM) therapy.

Blood cell count - A test to check the number of red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets in a sample of blood. Also called complete blood count (CBC).

Bone marrow biopsy - The removal of a sample of tissue from the bone marrow with a needle for examination under a microscope.

Bone marrow suppression - When bone marrow is not making blood cells due to disease or some type of treatment or toxin (example - chemotherapy).

Bone marrow transplantation - A procedure to replace bone marrow that has been destroyed by treatment with high doses of anticancer drugs or radiation. Transplantation may be autologous (an individual's own marrow saved before treatment), allogeneic (marrow donated by someone else), or syngeneic (marrow donated by an identical twin).

Bone metastases - Cancer that has spread from the original (primary) tumor to the bone.

Bone scan - A technique to create images of bones on a computer screen or on film. A small amount of radioactive material is injected into a blood vessel and travels through the bloodstream; it collects in the bones and is detected by a scanner.

Brachytherapy - A procedure in which radioactive material sealed in needles, seeds, wires or catheters is placed directly into or near a tumor. Also called internal radiation, implant radiation or interstitial radiation therapy.

Brain metastasis - Cancer that has spread from the original (primary) tumor to the brain.

Bronchogenic carcinoma - Cancer that starts in the bronchi, the large airways of the lungs.

Bronchoscopy - A procedure in which a thin, lighted tube is inserted through the nose or mouth. This allows examination of the inside of the trachea and bronchi (air passages that lead to the lung), as well as the lung. Bronchoscopy may be used to detect cancer or to perform some treatment procedures.

Cancer - A general term for a large group of diseases (more than 100), all characterized by uncontrolled growth, invasion and spread of abnormal cells to other parts of the body.

Cancer Committee - The cancer committee provides leadership for the cancer program.

Cancer of unknown primary origin - A case in which cancer cells are found in the body, but the place where the cells first started growing (the origin or primary site) cannot be determined.

Candidiasis - A condition in which *Candida albicans*, a type of yeast, grows out of control in moist skin areas of the body. It is usually a result of a weakened immune system, but can be a side effect of chemotherapy or treatment with

antibiotics. Thrush usually affects the mouth (oral thrush); however, rarely, it spreads throughout the entire body. Also called Candidosis or thrush.

Carcinogen - Any substance that initiates or promotes the development of cancer. For example, asbestos is a carcinogen.

Carcinoma - Cancer that begins in the skin or in tissues that line or cover internal organs.

Carcinoma in situ - Cancer that involves only the cells in which it began and that has not spread to nearby tissues.

Cardiomyopathy - A disease of the heart muscle that causes the heart to pump poorly.

CAT scan - A series of detailed pictures of areas inside the body, taken from different angles; the pictures are created by a computer linked to an X-ray machine. Also called computerized axial tomography, computed tomography (CT scan), or computerized tomography.

Central venous access catheter - A tube surgically placed into a blood vessel for the purpose of giving intravenous fluid and drugs. It also can be used to obtain blood samples. This device avoids the need for separate needle insertions for each infusion or blood test. Examples of these devices include Hickman catheters, which require clamps to make sure the valve is closed, and Groshong catheters, which have a valve that opens as fluid is withdrawn or infused and remains closed when not in use.

Chemotherapy - Treatment with anticancer drugs.

Chronic - A disease or condition that persists or progresses over a long period of time.

Clinical trial - The scientific evaluation of the means to prevent, detect, diagnose, or treat disease in human beings. Clinical trials are conducted after experiments in animals have shown evidence of potential effectiveness and preliminary studies in humans suggest usefulness.

CoC - Commission on Cancer - A consortium of professional organizations dedicated to improving survival and quality of life for cancer patients through standard-setting, prevention, research, education and the monitoring of comprehensive quality care.

Colonoscopy - An examination of the inside of the colon using a thin, lighted tube (called a colonoscope) inserted into the rectum. If abnormal areas are seen, tissue can be removed and examined under a microscope to determine whether disease is present.

Colostomy - An opening into the colon from the outside of the body. A colostomy provides a new path for waste material to leave the body after part of the colon has been removed.

Combination chemotherapy - Treatment using more than one anticancer drug

Congestive heart failure - Weakness of the heart muscle that leads to a buildup of fluid in body tissues.

Continuous infusion - The administration of a fluid into a blood vessel, usually over a prolonged period of time.

Cystitis - An inflammation of the bladder.

Diagnosis - The process of identifying a disease by the signs and symptom.

Dietitian - A health professional with special training in nutrition that can offer help with the choice of foods a person eats and drinks.

Distant - A tumor that has spread by direct extension beyond adjacent organs or tissues and/or metastasized to distant lymph nodes or other distant tissues.

Drug resistance - When cancer cells adapt so that the drug being used stops working.

Edema - Swelling caused by excess fluid in body tissues.

Electrocardiogram (EKG or ECG) - A test that looks at how the heart is working by measuring the electrical impulses it produces.

Electrolytes - Chemicals in the body, such as potassium and sodium, that keep fluids in balance and organs working properly.

Emesis - Vomiting with or without nausea.

Endometrial cancer - Cancer that starts in the lining of the uterus.

Esophagitis - Inflammation or irritation of the esophagus.

Excision - The removal of something (tissue, organ) by cutting.

Fine-needle aspiration - The removal of tissue or fluid with a needle for examination under a microscope. Also called needle biopsy.

Fistula - a hole that forms between two areas of the body.

Follow-up - The primary purpose of follow-up is to ensure continued medical surveillance and to monitor the health status of the population under investigation. The ACoS/CoC requires approved cancer programs to meet or exceed the target rate of 90 percent successful follow-up for the last five years and 80 percent successful follow-up since your reference date.

Frozen section - A procedure in which a sample of tissue is frozen after being removed from the body, placed under a microscope and examined for cancer cells.

Gastric - Relating to the stomach.

Genes - The material that passes on traits and characteristics from parents to their children.

Growth factor - A hormone-like substance (medication) that stimulates the bone marrow to produce blood cells; also called colony-stimulating factor (CSF).

Hematocrit - The number of red blood cells in the blood. Low hematocrit can be a sign of anemia.

Hematuria - Blood in the urine.

Hemoglobin - The part of the red blood cells that carries the oxygen to the cells of the body.

Hepatic - Relating to the liver.

Hormone - A substance made in several organs of the body and which the body uses to control growth, reproduction and the way the body works.

Hyperalimentation - Nourishing the body through the veins or a tube into the stomach with high calorie fluids; also called total parenteral nutrition (TPN).

Ileostomy - Surgery in which an opening is created between the small intestine and the surface of the abdomen to allow waste from the small intestine to empty into a collection bag.

Immunity or Immune system - The body's defense against disease and infection.

Immunosuppression - When the immune system has been weakened or damaged and cannot fight infection or disease.

IMRT - Intensity modulated radiation therapy (IMRT), a form of external radiation, is a sophisticated treatment which allows doctors to target tumors with a concentrated dose of high energy rays tailored to the precise size, shape and depth of the tumor.

In situ - A tumor that fulfills all microscopic criteria for malignancy but does not invade or penetrate surrounding tissue.

Informed consent - The process by which sufficient information is provided by the healthcare team in understandable language about proposed treatment in order for the patient to make decisions about treatment and care.

Infusion - Putting medication or fluid into the bloodstream over a period of time.

Injection - Putting medication into the body through a needle or syringe.

Intramuscular - Into the muscle.

Intravenous - Into the vein

Lesion - A damaged area in or on the body caused by an injury or a disease (such as cancer).

Leukemia - Cancer of the blood in which the body makes large numbers of abnormal blood cells.

Leukopenia - A low number of white blood cells.

Localized - A tumor that is invasive but remains restricted to the site of origin.

Lumpectomy - Surgery to remove a breast lump and some of the tissue around it.

Lymph nodes - Hundreds of small, bean-shaped organs (glands) located within specific areas of the body called lymphatic system. They act as filters to collect and destroy bacteria. Cancer cells that may be moving through the lymphatic system can become trapped in the lymph nodes.

Lymphatic system - A network of lymph nodes and vessels by which infection-fighting cells move through the body. Cancer cells can also use this network to travel and spread around the body.

Lymphedema - Swelling in the area drained by lymph nodes when lymph nodes have been removed or are blocked.

Lymphocytes - A type of white cells that responds when exposed to viruses or illness.

Lymphoma - Cancer of the lymphatic system.

Malabsorption - Impaired intestinal absorption of nutrients.

Malignant - A growth that tends to invade and destroy nearby tissues and spread to other parts of the body.

Malignant tumor - A tumor made up of cancer cells.

Mammogram - An X-ray of the breast taken to detect abnormal growths.

Mastectomy - Surgery to remove a breast.

Melanoma - Cancer of the pigment cells in the skin. It usually starts with a mole that changes in size, shape, or color.

Metasis or mets - Spreading of the cancer from the place where it started to the lymph nodes and/or others organs in the body.

Metastasis - Spreading of the cancer from the place where it started to the lymph nodes and/or others organs in the body.

Monoclonal antibodies - Antibodies designed to seek out chosen targets on cancer cells; they are under study to deliver chemotherapy and radiotherapy directly to a cancer, thus killing the cancer cells and sparing healthy tissue.

MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) - A scan that uses magnetic waves to create images of the body.

Mucosa - Membranes that line a body part or organ such as the mouth or bowel.

Mucositis - A condition in which mucous membranes swell and become inflamed.

Mucous membranes - Tissues that line the passages and cavities that communicate with air, such as the GI tract.

Multidisciplinary - Physicians from the diagnostic and treatment specialties and non-physicians from administrative and supportive services working together to ensure the full scope of care is available to all patients.

NCDB - National Cancer Database - A comprehensive clinical surveillance resource (database) used to track and compare the treatment of most types of cancers.

Neoadjuvant chemotherapy - Chemotherapy given before a planned surgery to shrink the tumor and make it easier to remove.

Neoplasm - An abnormal growth of cells that forms a tumor.

Neutropenia - A decrease in the number of infection-fighting white cells (called neutrophils).

Neutropenic fever - Body temperature over 101 degrees that occurs because the body does not have enough white cells to fight its own bacteria or an infection.

Non-analytic cases - Include those patients diagnosed and treated elsewhere, diagnosed and treated at our facility prior to 1989, or diagnosed at autopsy.

Ommaya reservoir - Device implanted in the ventricle of the brain through which chemotherapy is administered.

Oncologist - A doctor with special training in the treatment of cancer.

Oncology pharmacist - A pharmacist that specializes in cancer drugs.

Oncology-certified nurse (ONC) - A registered nurse who has passed a national test that proves he or she understands the specialty of oncology (cancer treatment).

Palliative treatment - Treatment aimed at easing the pain or other physical problems caused by cancer. Its goal is to make a patient as comfortable as possible. It is not meant to cure the disease.

Paracentesis - A needle is placed into the abdominal cavity to remove fluid that has built up in the area.

Pathological fracture - A break in the bone that happens without trauma. Occurs at a place in the body where cancer or another disease is present.

Pathology - A process of looking at the tissue samples and body fluids under a microscope to detect cancer cells, or to see how cancer cells have changed. A doctor that looks at these cells is called a pathologist.

PET scan (positron emission tomography) - A computerized scan used to look for cancer in the body by detecting highly active cells that are growing rapidly.

Phlebitis - Pain or swelling in the vein.

Photosensitivity - You are sensitive to light (including sunlight, filtered light and artificial light).

Placebo - A substance that contains no active ingredients and is sometimes used in a clinical trail as a comparison to a substance doctors are studying. Also known as a sugar pill.

Plasma - The fluid that blood cells float in.

Platelet count - The number of platelets in a sample of blood. Platelets are the cells that help blood clot.

Pleural effusion - Collection of fluid in the lining of the lung.

Polyp - A bulge in the mucous membrane that has grown out of shape. Polyps can be found in the bowel, bladder, throat and nose.

Primary sites - The site in the body where cancer originated.

Primary tumor - The place where a cancer starts.

Prognosis - A prediction of how a disease will progress over time.

Prophylactic - A medicine used to prevent or guard against a side effect of cancer treatment or disease.

Prosthesis - A man-made replacement for a missing body part, such as a breast, arm or leg.

Protocol - Treatment plan.

Radiation oncologist - A doctor who specializes in radiation therapy.

Radiation therapy - a form of cancer treatment that uses strong X-rays to damage or kill cancer cells.

Radiologist - A doctor who specializes in reading X-rays and scans.

Recurrence - When cancer comes back.

Red blood cells - Blood cells that carry oxygen to all the parts of the body.

Regional - A tumor that has spread by direct extension to adjacent organs or tissues and/or metastasized (e.g., spread) to regional lymph nodes but appears to have spread no further.

Regression - Shrinkage of a cancerous growth.

Relapse - The return of the cancer that has been treated and becomes undetectable on follow-up scans and test.

Remission - There has been no sign of cancer on follow-up scans and tests.

Renal - Relating to the kidney.

Sarcoma - Cancer of the bone, cartilage or muscle.

Simulation - An x-ray or fluoroscopic visualization of the area of the body to receive radiotherapy. A simulation is performed without actually delivering a treatment

Social worker - A professional who helps patients by providing emotional support, finding needed agencies or equipment and coordinating patient's discharge from the hospital.

Sputum - Liquid and phlegm made by the lungs.

Squamous cell carcinoma - Cancer that starts in the squamous layer of the skin or in organs that are covered with squamous cells. The lungs, head, neck, prostate and uterus all have squamous cells.

Stage at diagnosis - Refers to how far a cancer has spread from its site of origin when it is diagnosed.

Staging - A system doctors use to determine how far in the body the cancer has spread.

Stereotactic radiosurgery - SRS - A one-day, single treatment, outpatient procedure that delivers a focused dose of radiation to the target. With this treatment, the lesion location is determined by MRI scans and/or CT scans, a 3-D treatment plan is established, and then multiple precisely-guided radiation beams from the LINAC equipment treat the tumor in a single treatment. An SRS procedure is completed in a few hours and actual dose administration time is typically less than 45 minutes. Currently, SRS is appropriate for a variety of malignant and benign brain tumors as well as other brain disorders. When this same equipment and process is used to deliver a similarly accurate treatment in multiple fractions over several days it is called stereotactic radiotherapy.

Stoma - An opening made from the body cavity to the outside of the body.

Stomatitis - Soreness and swelling of the mouth caused by treatment.

Subcutaneous - Under the skin.

Subcutaneous Venous Access Device (VAD) - Device implanted under the skin through which chemotherapy, IV fluids and blood may be given; sometimes called "implanted port."

Systemic disease - Disease that affects the whole body, not just one organ.

Thrombocytopenia - A platelet count that is below normal.

Tracheostomy - Inserting a tube through the neck into the trachea (breathing pipe) to allow breathing.

Tumor - A group of cells that grows uncontrolled. It can be benign or malignant.

Tumor markers - Substances made by some cancer cells. They can build up in the blood or urine of people with cancer.

Unstaged - Insufficient information is available to determine the stage of disease at the time of diagnosis.

Virus - An infectious agent that can cause disease, such as the common cold virus.

White blood count - The total number of white blood cells in a blood sample. White blood cells fight infection.

Wide excision - The process of cutting away a wide area around a tumor or diseased tissue and leaving healthy, disease-free tissue.

X-ray - A way to look at bones and some internal organs using low levels of radiation.