

The exact causes of pancreatic cancer are not yet well understood. Research studies have identified certain risk factors that may increase the likelihood that an individual will develop pancreatic cancer.

Having one or more of the risk factors or disorders listed below does not mean an individual will develop pancreatic cancer. Some individuals who develop pancreatic cancer do not have any of these risk factors. Individuals who think they might be at risk for pancreatic cancer should discuss this with their doctor and/or genetic counselor.

Risk Factor	Description
Smoking	Smoking is a significant risk factor and may cause about 20-30% of all pancreatic cancer cases. People who smoke cigarettes are 2 times more likely to develop pancreatic cancer than people who do not smoke
Age	The chance of developing pancreatic cancer increases with age. Most people diagnosed with pancreatic cancer are over the age of 60
Family History	<p>If a person's mother, father, sibling, or child had pancreatic cancer, then that person's risk for developing the disease increases by 2-3 times. The risk increases if a greater number of family members are affected. Also, the risk of pancreatic cancer increases if there is a history of familial breast or colon cancer, familial melanoma or hereditary pancreatitis. Approximately 10% of pancreatic cancer cases are related to a family history of the disease.</p> <p>Individuals who smoke and have a family history of pancreatic cancer are at risk of developing pancreatic cancer up to 10 years earlier than their previously diagnosed family member(s)</p>
Chronic Pancreatitis and Hereditary Pancreatitis	<p>People with chronic pancreatitis have an increased risk of developing pancreatic cancer. Chronic pancreatitis is common in individuals who consume large amounts of alcohol for many years. The mumps virus and various autoimmune disorders can also cause chronic pancreatitis.</p> <p>Hereditary pancreatitis is characterized by recurrent episodes of inflammation of the pancreas that generally starts by the time a person is 20 years old. The risk of developing pancreatic cancer is even higher in individuals who have hereditary pancreatitis</p>
Race (Ethnicity)	African Americans have a higher incidence of pancreatic cancer compared to individuals of Asian, Hispanic, or Caucasian descent. There is also a higher incidence of pancreatic cancer among individuals of Ashkenazi Jewish descent. This may be due to a mutation in a breast cancer gene (BRCA2) that is found in about 1% of individuals of this background
Gender	Slightly more men are diagnosed with pancreatic cancer than women. This may be linked to higher smoking rates in men. With increasing smoking rates in women, the incidence of pancreatic cancer in women may soon equal that in men

Risk Factor	Description
Diabetes	Pancreatic cancer is more likely to occur in people who have long standing (over 5 years) diabetes. In pancreatic cancer patients who have had diabetes for less than 5 years, it is unclear if the diabetes contributed to the cancer or if the precancerous cells caused the diabetes
Diet	The association between diet and the development of pancreatic cancer is unclear. A diet high in red meats is thought to increase the risk of developing pancreatic cancer. A diet high in fruits and vegetables may decrease the risk
Obesity	For people who are considered obese, there may be a significantly increased risk of developing pancreatic cancer, especially those with excessive abdominal fat. The risk may decrease with increased physical activity
Physical Inactivity	Lack of physical activity or exercise has been associated with increased risk of pancreatic cancer in a large epidemiologic study