

Gastric Cancer: HER2 Testing



What is HER2?

Human Epidermal Growth receptor 2 (HER2) is a protein involved in normal cell growth, that is found in small amounts in almost all human cells, including stomach (gastric) cells.

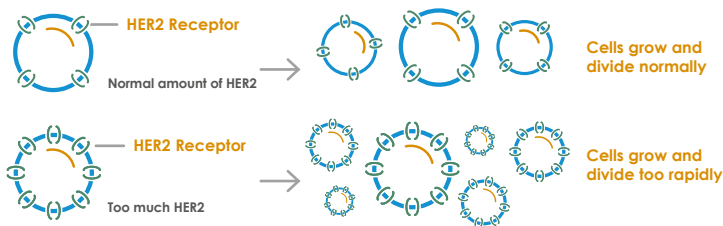
What is HER2+ gastric cancer?

Sometimes, a random change within cancer cells can result in too many copies or over-expression of HER2 on the cell surface. Gastric cancer cells with high levels of HER2 are considered HER2 positive (HER2+).

Why is HER2 an important biomarker?

HER2 over-expression causes cancer cells to grow aggressively and spread into organs across the body (metastasis).

While this is associated with a poor prognosis, targeted treatments that inhibit HER2 show promising results in patients with gastric cancer – making HER2 an important biomarker.¹



~20%
of all gastric cancers
over express HER2¹

Evaluating your HER2 status can serve as an important biomarker and therapeutic target for treating your gastric cancer.



Your **doctor** will discuss their **recommendation** to **evaluate your HER2 status** based on your diagnosis and medical history.



Current recommendations call for **HER2 testing** at the **time of diagnosis** with **advanced gastric cancer**.^{2,3}



It is recommended that the **diagnostic turnaround** time for HER2, ideally, does not exceed **5 working days**.³



Diagnosis should be made **from multiple (5-8) endoscopic biopsies**, as it is possible that a single sample may not have HER2+ cancer cells.²



Samples should be **validated** with **Immunohistochemistry (IHC)** and/or amplification by **in situ hybridization (ISH)** in a centralized testing center by a trained pathologist. Reported according to WHO criteria.²



Your **care team** will explain and discuss the **results of your pathology report**. If your cancer is **HER2+** they will discuss **targeted therapy treatment options**.



Current guidelines recommend treatment with **trastuzumab plus chemotherapy** for patients with **HER2 gastric cancer**. Following treatment with trastuzumab, **fam-trastuzumab** **deruxtecan** may be suggested.²

Navigating your HER2 status may feel overwhelming but speaking with your care team may help clear some doubts. Here are some questions to get the conversation started.

- Has my HER2 status been evaluated?
- What kind of sample is needed to evaluate my HER2 status? Will this cause me any side-effects?
- When will you know the status of my HER2 evaluation?
- Knowing that my HER2 status is positive, what are the next steps?

1. van Cutsem, E. *et al.* HER2 screening data from ToGA: targeting HER2 in gastric and gastroesophageal junction cancer. *Gastric Cancer* 18, 476–484 (2015).

2. Lordick F, Carneiro F, Cascinu S, Fleitas T, Haustermans K, Piessen G, Vogel A, Smyth EC, on behalf of the ESMO Guidelines Committee, *Gastric cancer: ESMO Clinical Practice Guideline for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up, Annals of Oncology* (2022)

3. Ruschoff J, *et. al.* HER2 testing in gastric cancer: A practical approach. *Modern Pathology*, 5, 637-650 (2012)

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