

# Cholangiocarcinoma

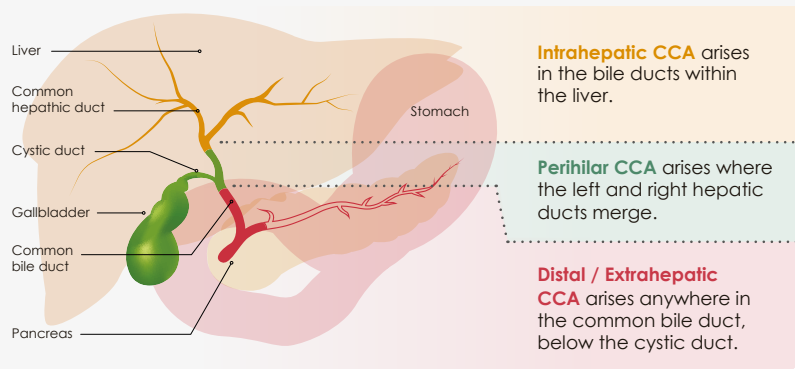
## Understanding the Risks, Signs, and Symptoms



### What is Cholangiocarcinoma?

Cholangiocarcinoma (CCA), a biliary tract cancer that is also known as bile duct cancer, originates in the bile ducts within or outside the liver. The biliary tract includes the liver, the gall bladder, and the bile ducts. The bile ducts transport bile from the liver to the gall bladder, where it is stored, and to the small intestine where it aids in the breakdown of fats during digestion.

CCA can be classified into:



Too often, CCA is diagnosed at a late stage, when the liver is already damaged and treatment options are limited. Being aware of the risks, signs, and symptoms of CCA can be lifesaving.

### Risks

While the precise cause of CCA remains unclear, established risk factors include a combination of illnesses and infections that cause chronic liver and bile duct damage, environmental toxins, and possibly a genetic predisposition.



**Primary sclerosing cholangitis (PSC):** is a chronic inflammation of the bile ducts



**Choledochal cysts:** are enlargements of the bile ducts that can result in bile accumulation



**Hepatolithiasis or bile duct stones:** can develop after infection or stagnation of bile, causing irritation and inflammation.



**Liver flukes:** are parasites that can infect the liver and gall bladder, this occurs primarily in Southeast Asia.



**Toxic chemical exposure**

Lesser established possible risk factors include:



**Inflammatory bowel disease**



**Viral hepatitis**



**Cirrhosis**



**Diabetes**



**Obesity**



**Smoking**



**Alcohol consumption**



**Genetic predispositions**

### Signs & Symptoms

CCA can go undiagnosed because the early symptoms can be nonspecific and are often overlooked:

- Stomach discomfort
- Nausea & low appetite
- Tiredness
- Feeling unwell
- Fevers & chills
- Weight loss

**Symptoms once the disease has advanced include:**

- jaundice (yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes)
- dark urine
- clay-coloured stool
- pain in the abdomen
- fever
- itchy skin
- nausea and vomiting

### Diagnosis

Currently, there are no routine screening tests to check for bile duct cancer, so it is important to speak with your doctor if you are experiencing symptoms or if you believe you may be at risk for developing CCA.

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