

Pancreatic Cancer UK

Transcript of 'Surgery and pancreatic cancer' information video

Title slide: Surgery and pancreatic cancer

Lisa, Specialist Nurse: My name is Lisa. I'm one of the specialist nurses working for Pancreatic Cancer UK. I work on the Support Line, helping to support patients affected by pancreatic cancer.

In this video we're going to talk about [pancreatic cancer and surgery](#).

Surgery is the best treatment option for somebody whose tumour is only in the pancreas. Unfortunately, if there is cancer outside of the pancreas in nearby organs, then surgery is not the right treatment option for you.

If you are able to have pancreatic surgery for your cancer, then this will happen within a [specialist centre](#) where the surgeons are experts in dealing with pancreatic surgery. When you meet the specialist surgeon, he or she will talk to you about the [types of surgery](#) and what is right for you.

Carol, in recovery from pancreatic cancer: The diagnosis came about quite accidentally really. I'd been rushed into hospital with a blocked bile duct and I had a laparoscopy to see what was going on inside. That was when what they'd noticed as a shadow on my scans was a predominant tumour attached to the portal vein. Within about 24, 25 days, they were talking about having major surgery to get rid of the lump.

Title slide: What is a Whipple's procedure?

Lisa: The [Whipple's procedure](#) is the most common type of surgery which is performed for pancreatic cancer. During the Whipple's procedure, the surgeon will remove the head of the pancreas, the gallbladder, part of the bile duct and the small intestine and part of the stomach. At the end of the surgery, they will re-join all of those parts back together again.

Carol: The surgery I had is called the Whipple's procedure. I didn't understand a lot of it at the time. So to simplify it, my surgeon actually came around with some printouts of my insides and basically drew circles around parts of the diagram. "This is what we're going to do, this is going to come out, that's going to come out, we'll reprocess this, re-plumb this" - so that I was fully aware then of what was going to be happening to me.

Lisa: Other types of surgery are also available for pancreatic cancer. This might be a [distal pancreatectomy](#) or a [total pancreatectomy](#).

Title slide: What is a distal pancreatectomy?

Lisa: A distal pancreatectomy is performed if you have a tumour in the tail of your pancreas. This requires a surgeon to remove the tail of the pancreas along with the spleen.

Title slide: What is a total pancreatectomy?

Lisa: A total pancreatectomy involves the entire pancreas being removed, along with your spleen, gallbladder, part of the bile duct, part of the small intestine and also sometimes part of your stomach.

Title slide: Having surgery for pancreatic cancer

Lisa: This is major surgery and surgery will take probably between four or seven hours or as long as it needs. To ensure that you are as fit and well as possible for surgery ask your medical team and nurse if there is anything that they can help you with. So try and get out, get walking, and try and eat as well as possible but do ask for help.

Title slide: What happens after surgery for pancreatic cancer?

Lisa: [After your surgery](#), you'll be monitored closely by the medical and nursing team. You're likely to be in hospital for one or two weeks after the operation. But people are usually out of bed after one or two days. You'll be encouraged to sit out in a chair, possibly even on the first day after your operation.

Carol: After the surgery, I was moved to the intensive care ward, where they told me I would be between three and five days depending on my recovery, then they moved me to a specialist ward where I wasn't very well at all for about the next ten days. A lot of vomiting, a lot of diarrhoea and a lot more pain medication. But apart from that I really didn't have any bad side effects at all.

Lisa: The nurses will look after you after your operation and gradually help you to start eating again. You will also find yourself quite tired after this operation, and so when you go home it might be useful to have somebody around to help you perhaps do some washing, some cooking or some shopping for you.

Most people find that gentle physical activity actually helps their recovery and it's important to try really hard to get up and get active.

Recovery for some people will take perhaps two months, for others it might take them a year to be as active as they were.

Carol: So I'd get out of the bed every day and just do a lap around my bed. And it might take me an hour. But that lap I was determined I was going to do. Get out one side of the bed, walk around and get in the other. And then I progressed to walking around the room and you've got to get that determination from wherever it is you've got to dig deep.

Title slide: Side effects of surgery for pancreatic cancer?

Lisa: [Side effects](#) affect everybody in different ways. But you will have some side effects after surgery, You'll be given painkillers to help you with [pain](#). But if this isn't strong enough, you must ask the medical team or nurses for more pain relief. Gradually, you'll be able to reduce the amount of pain tablets that you take, and eventually you will stop them.

The pancreas plays a large role in [digestion of your food](#). So after pancreatic surgery, you might find that your digestion changes a little bit. You may need to take [pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy](#) which are tablets to help you digest your food better.

Pancreatic cancer can lead to [diabetes](#) as can having pancreatic surgery. If you become diabetic, your medical team will help advise what medication you need.

Carol: I'm still not back to 100%, but I'm about 95% there. My surgery was a year and 20 days ago and I feel fantastic.

Lisa: You can use our [Support Line](#) to talk to one of our specialist nurses about having surgery or about your recovery after surgery on **0808 801 0707**. We also have an email which is nurse@pancreaticcancer.org.uk.

We also provide information on our website at pancreaticcancer.org.uk/surgery