

Sometimes, your heartburn is telling you more than what you've just eaten.

Chronic heartburn could lead to esophageal cancer if not treated. As the cancer develops, the following symptoms may appear:

- Difficult or painful swallowing
- Severe weight loss
- Pain in the throat or back, behind the breastbone or between the shoulder blades
- Hoarseness or chronic coughing
- Vomiting
- Coughing up blood



In Memory of Gary Smith, 1946 – 2007

Gary Smith was a healthy, esteemed athlete in his 50s who was a gold-medal winning basketball player in the World Masters Mens Basketball League and a player on the Canadian National Men's Basketball team when he was young. He was also a respected high school basketball coach and high school principal. For more than a decade, Gary suffered from chronic heartburn and remedied it with non-prescription antacids. In December 2005, Gary started suffering from back pain, a symptom that would be diagnosed as esophageal cancer four months later by Dr. Brock Pullen at Royal Columbian Hospital. Sadly, Gary passed away in September 2007 at the age of 60.

This brochure has been developed by Gary's loving wife, Nichola Smith, and Dr. Kenneth Atkinson, to encourage early detection of esophageal cancer.

To help fund equipment to screen for Esophageal Cancer at Royal Columbian Hospital, please visit:

rchfoundation.com or call 604.520.4438



Do you suffer from heartburn?

What You Need to Know About Esophageal Cancer





Heartburn can be fatal

Acid reflux, or heartburn, is a common condition that affects millions of Canadians. It occurs when digestive acid from the stomach backs up into the esophagus.

Almost everyone at one time has experienced some acid reflux after they've eaten a spicy meal, or lay down after eating. Popping some non-prescription antacids in these cases usually brings some relief.

When heartburn occurs on a daily or weekly basis during a period of time; however, then it becomes cause for concern.

Chronic acid reflux can develop into a pre-cancerous condition called Barrett's Esophagus. Constant exposure to stomach acids changes the cells of the esophagus so they begin to resemble the cells that line the stomach. According to the Canadian Digestive Health Foundation, it is believed that those living with Barrett's Esophagus may be at an increased risk of developing esophageal cancer and should have an endoscopy test.

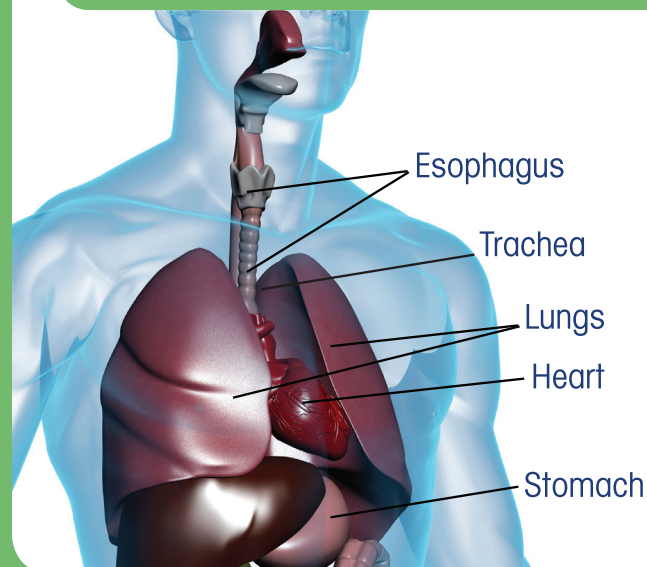
Who is at risk for esophageal cancer?

According to the Canadian Digestive Health Foundation, it is believed that about half of all esophageal cancers arise from adenocarcinoma, which seems to be closely related to heartburn, and possibly other things like hazardous chemicals and inhalants.

Contributing risk factors include:

- Age – people who are 40+ years of age and who have had acid reflux for more than 10 years
- Smoking
- Sex - males are more likely to develop esophageal cancer
- Obesity
- Chronic alcohol use, especially when combined with smoking
- Existing diagnosis of Barrett's Esophagus
- Existing diagnosis of other head and neck cancers

People over the age of 40 should talk to their doctor about getting screened if they have had chronic heartburn for more than 10 years.



Early detection is critical

If you suffer from chronic heartburn or occasional heartburn and feel you are at risk, talk to your doctor today about scheduling an endoscopy test. It could save your life.

For more information, visit the Canadian Digestive Health Foundation at www.cdhf.ca