

# HEPATOCELLULAR CARCINOMA

## What is Hepatocellular Carcinoma?

Hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) is the most common form of liver cancer in adults. It accounts for about 3 out of 4 cancers that start in the liver. HCC begins when hepatocytes (liver cell), begin to grow abnormally.

## What are the Risk Factors for Hepatocellular Carcinoma?

Risk factors increase a person's chance of getting a disease. However, having a risk factor does not mean you will be diagnosed with the disease. Risk factors for hepatocellular carcinoma include:

- Chronic Hepatitis B or C
- Excessive alcohol consumption
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Pre-existing liver cirrhosis

## Who is at Increased Risk for Hepatocellular Carcinoma?

- Race: Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders tend to be at a greater risk
- Gender: men are more likely to develop liver cancer than women
- Age: commonly diagnosed in adulthood

## What are the symptoms of Hepatocellular Carcinoma?

Liver cancer is called a silent killer because most people do not notice early signs or symptoms. When symptoms do appear, the disease is already quite advanced. Symptoms may include some or all of the following:

- Abdominal pain, which may be localized to the area under the ribs on the right side of the body
- Decreased appetite and weight loss
- Nausea and vomiting
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes)
- An enlarged liver

## What Are the Treatments for HCC?

Currently, surgery is the only treatment which offers a reasonable chance of curing liver cancer. Two surgical options are removal of the tumor or liver



Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor  
State of California

Kimberly Belshé, Secretary  
California Health and Human Services  
Agency

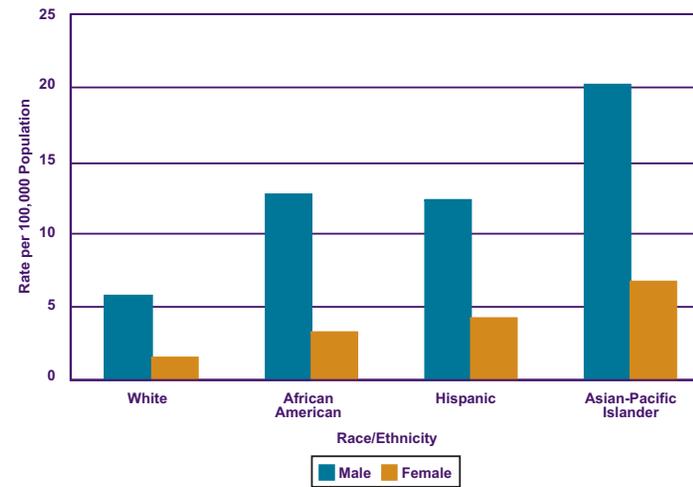
Mark B. Horton, MD, MSPH, Director  
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transplant. However, surgical resection (removal of the tumor) is only possible in 10-15% of cases. Treatment for hepatocellular carcinoma depends on the tumor size and stage of the cancer as well as age and overall health. Other treatment options include: alcohol injection, radiofrequency ablation, chemoembolization, cryoablation, radiation therapy, and chemotherapy. All options need to be discussed carefully with your physician.

## Who Survives Hepatocellular Carcinoma?

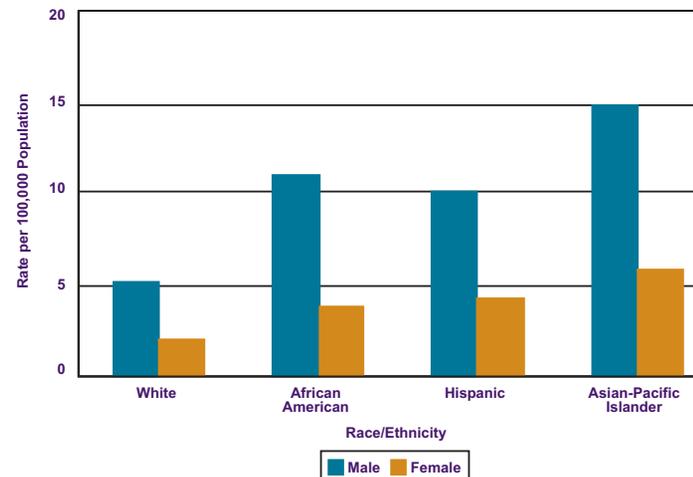
Survival of liver cancer is generally poor. Cure and long term survival are possible only when tumors can be removed completely, without too much compromise of the liver. Statistics regarding survival from hepatocellular carcinoma are usually reported as five-year survival rates. The five-year HCC survival rate is the percentage of people who are alive five-years after HCC diagnosis. In California, the five-year relative HCC survival rate is 19.4%

Liver Cancer Incidence by Sex and Race/Ethnicity, California 2002-2006



Source: California Cancer Registry, California Department of Public Health.

Liver Cancer Mortality by Sex and Race/Ethnicity, California, 2002-2006



Source: California Cancer Registry, California Department of Public Health.