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How Surgery Is Used for Cancer

Surgery is used to prevent, diagnose, stage, and treat cancer. Surgery can also relieve (palliate) discomfort or problems related to cancer. Sometimes, one surgery can take care of more than one of these goals. In other cases, different operations may be needed over time. You will find specific cancer operations discussed in treatment information for each cancer type.

- [Surgery to diagnose cancer](#)
 - [Surgery to stage cancer](#)
 - [Curative surgery](#)
 - [Surgery to debulk cancer](#)
 - [Palliative surgery](#)
 - [Supportive surgery](#)
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it's not done to treat or cure the cancer itself.

Supportive surgery

Supportive surgery is done to help make it easier for people to get other types of treatment. For example, a [vascular access device](#)⁹ such as a Port-A-Cath[®] or Infusaport[®] is a thin, flexible tube that can be surgically placed into a large vein and connected to a small drum-like device that's placed just under the skin. A needle is put into the drum of the port to give treatments and draw blood, instead of putting needles in the hands and arms each time IV fluids, blood transfusions, or treatments are given.

Restorative (reconstructive) surgery

Reconstructive surgery is used to improve the way a person looks after major cancer surgery. It's also used to restore the function of an organ or body part after surgery. Examples include [breast reconstruction after mastectomy](#)¹⁰ or the use of tissue flaps, bone grafts, or prosthetic (metal or plastic) materials after [surgery for head and neck cancers](#)¹¹.

Preventive (prophylactic) surgery

Preventive or prophylactic surgery is done to remove body tissue that's likely to become cancer – even though there are n– even though there are n– eveneventivhyllactic) surgery0 r n– eint.

3. www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/treatment-types/chemotherapy.html
4. www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/treatment-types/radiation.html
5. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/ovarian-cancer.html
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11. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/oral-cavity-and-oropharyngeal-cancer/treating/surgery.html
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Our team is made up of doctors and oncology certified nurses with deep knowledge of cancer care as well as editors and translators with extensive experience in medical writing.

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