**Pancreatic Cancer Fact Sheet**

In Northern Ireland, around 250 people are diagnosed with pancreatic cancer each year, with many diagnosed at a later stage.

**The pancreas**

The pancreas is a vital gland important for healthy digestion producing digestive juices containing enzymes which breakdown particles entering the body. The pancreas also produces insulin which is essential for maintaining blood sugar levels.

**Risk factors for pancreatic cancer**

* Increasing age - 80 to 90% of NI pancreatic cancer cases are in the 60+ age range.
* Smoking - A cigarette contains 7,000 chemicals of which 70 are carcinogenic.
* Socioeconomic deprivation - incidence is 10% lower in Northern Ireland’s least deprived areas
* Consumption of red and processed meat - especially smoked meats
* Body weight - being overweight / obese
* Physical inactivity
* Family history - 5 to 10 out of 100 cases have a family history
* Chronic inflammation of the pancreas - related to long episodes of alcohol consumption

**Symptoms**

The early stages of pancreatic cancer can go unnoticed. Some symptoms may include:

* Abdominal pain that reaches your back
* Loss of appetite or interest in food
* Unaccountable weight loss
* Changes in toilet habits and bowel movements
* Indigestion, bloating and burping
* Yellow taint to eyes and skin
* Recently diagnosed diabetes

If you have any of these symptoms it is important to seek advice from your doctor - early detection can save your life.

**How can you reduce your risk?**

* Maintain a healthy weight
* Exercise regularly
* If you drink alcohol, limit your intake. However, not drinking alcohol is better.
* Don’t start smoking, or stop if you already do. For more information [www.stopsmokingni.info](http://www.stopsmokingni.info)
* Limit your consumption of red meat (beef, lamb and pork) to 4-5 portions per week

If you have any concerns contact our Nurse Line on 0800 783 3339