

# “Understanding Native American Cancer Data in Arizona”

## 3rd Series Topic: Liver and Intrahepatic Bile Duct Cancer

You may have been seeing a considerable amount of information about liver and intrahepatic bile duct cancer, here is why:

**Top 5 Arizona Cancer Mortality Sites for Native American Females, 2016-2020**

Rank	Cancer Site	Avg Annual # of Deaths
1	Female Breast	15
2	Liver and Intrahepatic Bile Duct	13
3	Colorectal	12
4	Pancreas	12
5	Ovarian	11

**Top 5 Arizona Cancer Mortality Sites for Native American Males, 2016-2020**

Rank	Cancer Site	Avg Annual # of Deaths
1	Liver and Intrahepatic Bile Duct	18
2	Prostate	15
3	Colorectal	14
4	Pancreas	12
5	Lung and Bronchus	11

\*Data sourced from the Arizona Cancer Registry's mortality data trends in Arizona's Native American population from 2016-2020.

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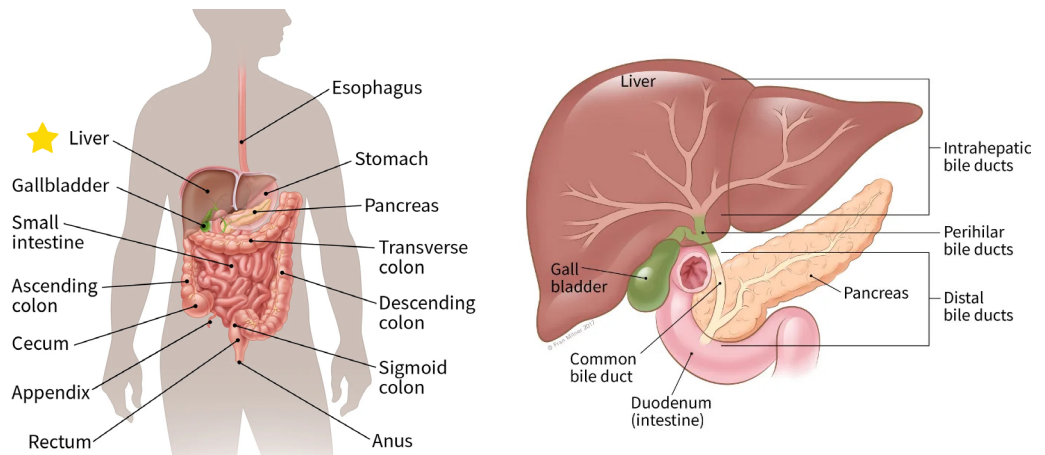
**Liver and Intrahepatic Bile Duct cancer is the first leading cause of cancer-related death in Arizona Native American (NA) males and the second leading cause of cancer-related death in Arizona NA females.** Nationally, liver cancer rates were between **50% to over 3 times higher** for NA people compared to the White population and among the 65+ age group are between **2 to 3 times higher** for NA males compared with the White population. Within NA communities, the rates of liver cancer are **significantly higher** for NA males compared with NA females. As for bile duct (BD) cancer, there are no blood tests or other tests that can reliably detect BD cancers early enough to be useful as screening tests. Because of this, most BD cancers are found only after the cancer has grown enough to cause signs or symptoms. Therefore, it is imperative that NA groups understand their increased risk, take the proper precautions, and know the signs and symptoms to look out for.

### What exactly is liver and intrahepatic bile duct cancer?

#### Where are the liver and intrahepatic bile ducts located and what do they do?

- The **liver** is the largest internal organ that makes bile to help the body use food. It also cleans the blood and helps the blood clot when you are cut.

- The **bile ducts** are a series of thin tubes that go from the liver to the small intestine and their main job is to allow bile to go from the liver and gallbladder into the small intestine, where it helps digest the fats in food.



## What is liver and intrahepatic bile duct cancer?

- **Liver cancers** start when cells in the liver start to change and grow out of control, crowding out normal cells.
- **Intrahepatic bile duct cancers** start in the bile ducts that are inside the liver.

**Visit the American Indian Cancer Foundation's resources for Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C to learn more about how to protect yourself!**

## What can you do to reduce your risk?

**The best way to prevent liver cancer is to prevent cirrhosis and hepatitis B and C infections. You can reduce your risk of liver cancer through changes in lifestyle choices:**

- Get screened and vaccinated for hepatitis B
- Limit alcohol use
- Quit (or don't start) smoking commercial tobacco
- Maintain a healthy weight

**Protect yourself from hepatitis B and C by taking the following precautions:**

- Not sharing needles, other injection drug equipment, or equipment used to snort or smoke drugs
- Practice safer sex, including condom use
- Only getting tattoos and body piercings from someone licensed
- Get tested from hepatitis B and C, seek medical care if you have it

## What are the signs and symptoms?

**Most people do not have signs and symptoms in the early stages of liver cancer. When symptoms appear, they may include:**

- Weight loss without trying and/or loss of appetite
- Discomfort in the upper abdomen on the right-side
- Nausea, vomiting, and/or unusual tiredness
- A swollen abdomen
- Yellow discoloration of skin and whites of eyes (also called jaundice)
- White stools

## Screening recommendations?

**At this time, there are no widely recommended screening tests for liver cancer in people who are at average risk.**

- **For people at higher risk** of liver cancer, some experts recommend screening for liver cancer with alpha-fetoprotein (AFP) blood tests and ultrasound exams every 6 months.

**Only a small number of bile duct cancers are found before they have spread too far to be removed by surgery.**

- The bile ducts are deep inside the body, so small tumors can't be seen or felt during routine physical exams. There are no blood tests or other tests that can reliably detect bile duct cancers early enough to be useful as screening tests.

## All that in mind...

It is important to be aware of one's risk of liver and intrahepatic bile duct cancers and to know the signs and symptoms to look out for. Moreover, it is pivotal for NA communities to know how to reduce their risk.

**It is natural to feel scared or anxious about cancer, but it is also beneficial to learn more about it and to be proactive about your health.**

***Your health is sacred.  
Please take the proper precautions and encourage your relatives to do the same!***