

Liver Metastases

What Are Liver Metastases?

Liver metastases (also called **secondary liver cancer**) occur when cancer from another part of the body **spreads to the liver**. This is different from **primary liver cancer**, which starts in the liver itself.

Many types of cancer can spread to the liver, including:

- **Bowel (colorectal) cancer** – the most common source.
- **Breast cancer**
- **Lung cancer**
- **Pancreatic cancer**
- **Stomach cancer**

Liver metastases are a sign that cancer has spread beyond its original site, but with the right treatment, many patients can still be effectively managed and live longer with good quality of life.

Symptoms Of Liver Metastases

Liver metastases **do not always cause symptoms** in the early stages. However, as they grow, they may lead to:

- **Abdominal pain** – usually in the right side, under the ribs.
- **Unexplained weight loss** and **loss of appetite**.
- **Fatigue** or feeling weak.
- **Yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice)**.
- **Swelling in the abdomen (ascites)** due to fluid build-up.

If you have been diagnosed with cancer and experience these symptoms, **speak to a specialist** for further evaluation.

How Are Liver Metastases Diagnosed?

Liver metastases are usually detected through **imaging scans** or **blood tests**. Common diagnostic methods include:

- **CT scan or MRI scan** – provides detailed images of the liver to check for tumours.
- **PET Scan** – used in some cases to detect cancer spread throughout the body.
- **Liver function tests** – blood tests to assess how well your liver is working.
- **Biopsy** – a small tissue sample may be taken to confirm the diagnosis.

Your specialist will recommend the best tests based on your symptoms and medical history.

Can Liver Metastases Be Treated?

Yes. While liver metastases can be **challenging to treat**, modern medicine offers **several options** that can improve survival and quality of life.

Surgery (liver resection)

- **In selected cases**, surgery may be an option to **remove the metastases**.
- This is most effective for **bowel cancer that has spread to the liver**.
- **Liver resection can be curative** in carefully chosen patients.

Chemotherapy

- **Systemic chemotherapy** (whole-body treatment) is commonly used.
- **Targeted chemotherapy** may be delivered **directly to the liver** to minimise side effects.
- Chemotherapy is often used **before or after surgery** to shrink tumours and prevent further spread.

Ablative therapies (minimally invasive treatments)

- **Radiofrequency ablation (RFA)** – uses heat to destroy cancer cells.
- **Microwave ablation (MWA)** – similar to RFA but often more effective for larger tumours.
- **Selective internal radiation therapy (SIRT)** – tiny radioactive beads are injected into the liver to target tumours.

Immunotherapy & targeted therapy

- Some cancers, such as lung and bowel cancer, **respond well to immunotherapy**.
- **Targeted therapies** block specific cancer growth signals and can be **effective in combination with other treatments**.

Your treatment plan will be personalised based on **the type of cancer, its extent, and your overall health**.

What To Expect After Treatment

Recovery depends on **the type of treatment you receive**. Common considerations include:

- **After surgery:** A hospital stay of a few days may be required, with **several weeks of recovery** at home.

- **After chemotherapy:** Side effects such as fatigue, nausea, and hair loss may occur but are manageable.
- **After ablation or SIRT:** You may go home the same day or after a short hospital stay.

Regular follow-up scans and blood tests will be needed to **monitor your liver health and cancer response**.

What Is The Outlook For Liver Metastases?

The prognosis for liver metastases **varies based on the type of primary cancer and response to treatment**. However, advances in liver surgery, chemotherapy, and targeted therapies mean that **many patients can live longer with effective management**.

For some patients, **long-term remission** is possible, particularly for colorectal liver metastases that can be surgically removed. Your liver specialist will provide **individualised advice** based on your condition.

Why Choose Birmingham Liver Clinic?

At **Birmingham Liver Clinic**, we offer:

Expert liver specialists with experience in treating liver metastases.

Advanced diagnostic imaging for fast and accurate assessments.

Personalised treatment plans tailored to your condition and health goals.

State-of-the-art surgical and non-surgical options for managing liver metastases.

Contact Us

If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with liver metastases, early specialist care can make a difference. Contact us today to discuss your treatment options and receive expert care from our dedicated liver specialists.