

# Saving more than life: The importance of organ preservation in cancer surgery

Dr Niranjan Naik

Cancer treatment has come a long way. Today, the goal is not just to remove the disease, but also to preserve as much of the body's normal function and quality of life as possible. This approach is known as organ preservation in surgical oncology.

For many patients, this means effective cancer treatment without losing an entire organ - allowing them to return to a more normal, active life after recovery.

### WHAT IS ORGAN PRESERVATION?

In simple terms, organ preservation means treating cancer while saving the affected organ, either fully or partially. Instead of removing the entire organ, surgeons carefully remove only the cancerous tissue, ensuring that the healthy part continues to function. This approach is possible due to advances in surgical techniques, imaging, and multidisciplinary cancer care.

### WHERE IS IT COMMONLY USED?

Organ preservation is now being used in several types of cancers, including:

- Breast cancer: Breast-conserving surgery instead of full removal
- Regional lymph node management - Sentinel Lymph Node Biopsy (SLNBx)
- Larynx (voice box) cancer: Preserving the ability to speak



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- Rectal cancer: Avoiding permanent colostomy in selected cases
- Kidney tumors: Removing only the tumor while saving the kidney
- Bladder and oral cancers: Maintaining normal function where possible. The choice depends on the stage, size, type and location of the tumor.

### WHY ORGAN PRESERVATION MATTERS?

While removing cancer remains the top priority, preserving the organ offers important benefits:

- Better quality of life after treatment
  - Preservation of normal body functions
  - Less physical and emotional impact
  - Faster recovery in many cases
  - Improved confidence and well-being
- For patients, this means not just surviving cancer but

living well after treatment. In technical terms it is known as better advantage in disease free survival (DFS) and overall survival (OS).

### HOW IS IT ACHIEVED?

Organ preservation requires a carefully planned, personalised approach.

It may involve:

- Advanced imaging for precise tumour mapping
  - Minimally invasive or precision-guided surgery
  - Advances in Robotic Onco-Surgery
  - Combination of surgery with chemotherapy/ immunotherapy or radiotherapy
  - Multidisciplinary decision-making by cancer specialists
- The goal is to remove cancer completely while protecting surrounding healthy tissues.

### IS IT SUITABLE FOR EVERYONE?

Not all cancers can be treated with organ-preserving techniques. In some cases,



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complete removal of the organ may still be necessary to ensure patient safety.

The decision depends on:

- Stage of cancer
- Spread of disease
- Overall health of the patient

Early detection plays a key role - cancers diagnosed at an early stage are more likely to be treated with organ preservation.

### A SHIFT TOWARDS PATIENT-CENTERED CANCER CARE

Modern cancer care is no longer just about aggressive treatment - it is about balanced, patient-focused outcomes. Organ preservation reflects this shift. It combines medical expertise, technology, and thoughtful planning to ensure that patients not only overcome cancer but also maintain their dignity, independence, and quality of life.

*Disclaimer: The veracity of the claims made in this article is the responsibility of the author/doctor concerned.*



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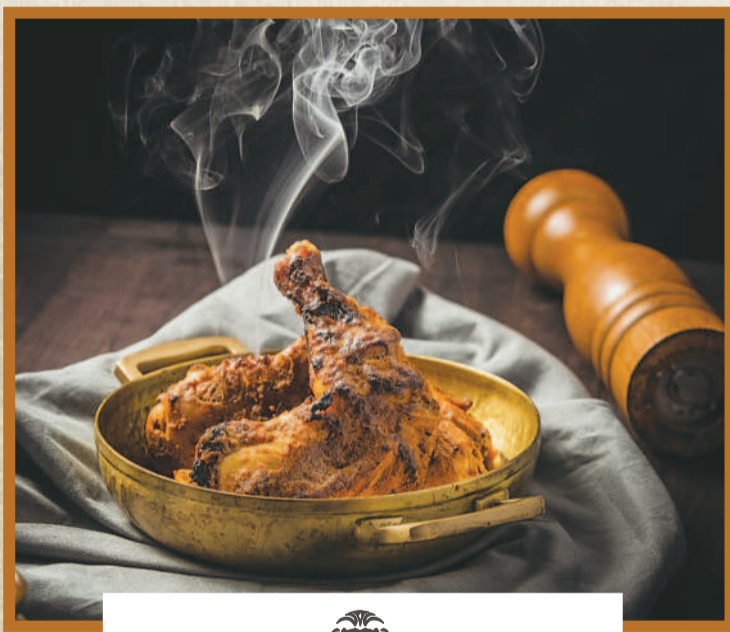
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