

**Patient Information about Colon Cancer (Colorectal Cancer)**

<http://www.oncologychannel.com/patient-information-colon-cancer/index.shtml>

Colon cancer, also called colorectal cancer or rectal cancer, develops in the large intestine (large bowel) in the digestive tract. Cancer of the colon is the fourth most common type of cancer. The disease often begins as a benign (noncancerous), abnormal growth or tumor in the lining of the colon. These growths, which are called intestinal polyps, colorectal polyps, or adenomas, can become precancerous and then cancerous.

Common signs and symptoms of colon cancer include blood in the stool, changes in bowel habits, and anemia (low red blood cell count). Colorectal cancer diagnosis may involve digital rectal exam (DRE), fecal occult blood test, colonoscopy, and other diagnostic tests. Colon cancer screening is an important part of health care, especially for people over the age of 50.

Here are some questions to ask your doctor about colorectal cancer. **Print this page**, mark the questions you would like answered, and take it with you to your next medical appointment. The more you know about cancer of the colon, the easier it will be to make important decisions about colon cancer prevention and treatment.

**Questions to Ask Your Doctor about Colon Cancer**

- What makes you suspect that I have colon cancer?
- What other medical conditions might be causing my symptoms?
- What are common risk factors for colorectal cancer?
- Am I at increased risk for the disease? Why or why not?
- What types of examinations and diagnostic tests are performed to diagnose cancer of the colon?
- What do these tests involve?
- How should I prepare for these colon cancer tests? **Instructions:**
- Will I be able to drive myself home after my test(s) or will I need someone to drive me?
- Will I require any special assistance at home after undergoing these diagnostic procedures?
- Should I call for my test results or will someone contact me? **Date to call: Telephone number to call:**
- What is the stage of my cancer?

- In which section of the colon is the cancer located?
- What is the usual prognosis for patients with this type and stage of colorectal cancer?
- Should I get a second medical opinion before beginning cancer treatment? Why or why not?
- Who will be the members of my oncology team? **Specialists:**
- How do I contact the members of my health care team? **Telephone number(s) to call:**
- Can my colon cancer be treated surgically? If so, what type of surgical procedure do you recommend?
- What does this colorectal cancer surgery involve?
- Will I have a temporary or permanent colostomy after the procedure? If so, what might this involve?
- How long is the typical hospital stay for this procedure?
- What might my recovery involve?  
**Restrictions:** **Date to resume normal activities:**
- Might I require special assistance at home after the procedure? If so, how can I arrange for the help I need?
- What should I do if I develop complications after surgery? **Telephone number to call:**
- When will I be seen for a follow-up examination? **Date:**
- What other types of colon cancer treatment are available?
- What treatment(s) do you recommend?
- What are the benefits, disadvantages, and possible complications of chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and biological therapy (immunotherapy) for colorectal cancer?
- What do these colon cancer treatments involve?
- How long will my treatment last?
- How can I expect to feel during treatment?

- What are the common side effects associated with these treatments?
- What should I do if my symptoms worsen or I experience complications or severe side effects? **Telephone number to call:**
- How will my condition be monitored after my cancer treatment?
- How often will I have follow-up medical appointments?
- What types of tests will be performed?
- What do these tests involve?
- If my cancer recurs or I develop metastatic colon cancer, what are my treatment options?
- Do you recommend that I participate in a clinical trial for colorectal cancer patients? Why or why not?
- What types of experimental colon cancer treatments are being developed?
- Can you recommend online or local support groups for people who have colon cancer and for their families?
- Can you recommend a reliable source for additional information about colorectal cancer?

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**Notes/Additional Information**