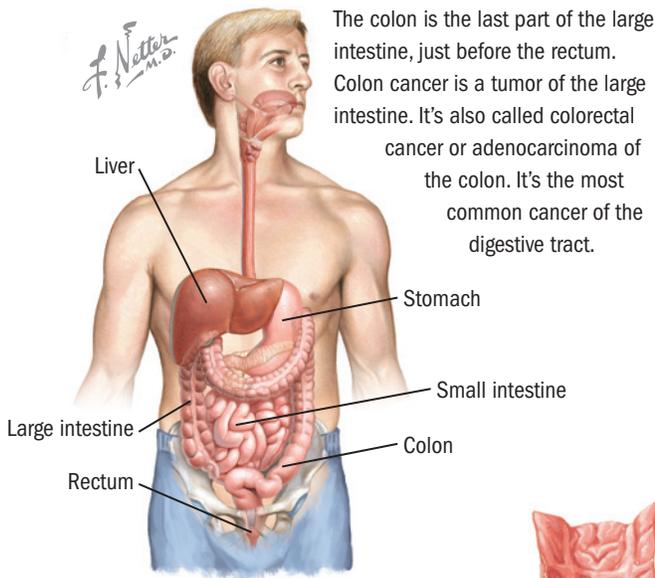
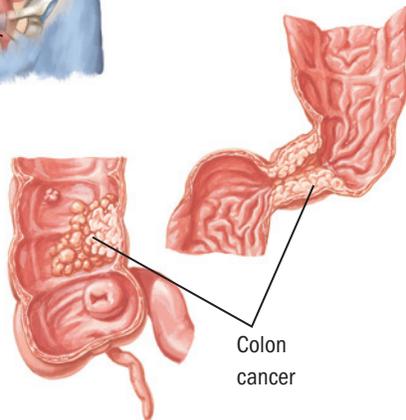


# MANAGING YOUR COLON CANCER



The colon is the last part of the large intestine, just before the rectum. Colon cancer is a tumor of the large intestine. It's also called colorectal cancer or adenocarcinoma of the colon. It's the most common cancer of the digestive tract.

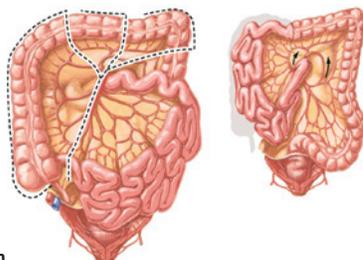
Early diagnosis and treatment are critical. Untreated colon cancer usually spreads into nearby areas, liver, and sometimes lungs and bones.



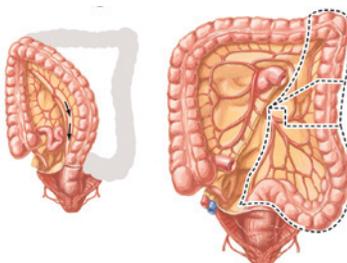
Treatment depends on how far the cancer spread. Abdominal and pelvic CT can tell whether it spread outside the colon. This information is used to decide which treatment to use.

## Partial colectomy of right colon

Surgery is best for complete tumor removal and offers the best chance for cure for localized cancer. With surgery, the doctor removes the part of the colon with the tumor.



## Partial colectomy of left colon



Dashed lines show parts of colon being removed. Gray areas show the old colon shape.

## What Is Colon Cancer?

Food that is swallowed goes from the stomach into the small intestine and then the large intestine. What's left after food is digested leaves the body as waste (stool) through the rectum. The colon is the last part of the large intestine, just before the rectum. Colon cancer is a tumor of the large intestine, often the lower rectum and sigmoid colon but can also involve the beginning (cecum). It's also called colorectal cancer or adenocarcinoma of the colon. It's the most common cancer of the digestive tract.

Colon cancer usually starts as a small growth, called a polyp, on the surface of the colon. Some polyps are harmless, but some can turn into cancer.

## What Are the Symptoms of Colon Cancer?

Symptoms include a change in bowel habits, such as constipation or diarrhea, change in stool size (e.g., pencil thin) or appearance (e.g., black, tarry-looking), rectal bleeding, and pain in the abdomen (belly). Sometimes people have no symptoms, but iron deficiency anemia may occur from chronic blood loss and can be detected by blood tests ordered by your physician.

Early diagnosis is critical, because undetected or untreated cancer usually spreads (metastasizes) through the intestine wall into nearby areas, liver, and sometimes lungs and bones.

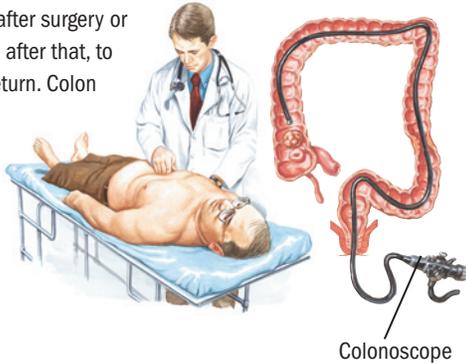
## How Is Colon Cancer Diagnosed?

The doctor may suspect the diagnosis from a complete physical examination, including a digital rectal examination (DRE), and from blood tests showing iron deficiency anemia. Stool samples are tested for hidden (occult) blood. The doctor then looks inside the colon with a flexible tube called a colonoscope and obtains tissue samples of abnormal areas (biopsy). A computed tomography (CT) scan and other tests may be done to determine if the cancer has spread outside of the colon.



Medicine (chemotherapy) and radiation can be used to try to kill cancer cells not removed by surgery. Both may have side effects, including inflammation with diarrhea and bloody stools (radiation) and bone marrow problems leading to infections, bleeding, and anemia (chemotherapy).

Make sure that you have a colonoscopy 1 year after surgery or sooner and regularly after that, to watch for cancer's return. Colon cancer screening is important for everyone, starting at age 50 or sometimes earlier, depending on other risk factors.



Colonoscope



Good nutrition is important after surgery. Eat a high-fiber diet and watch your weight. Keep your lifestyle healthy with exercise and not smoking.



Ask your doctor about support groups where you can share concerns with others who were also diagnosed and treated for colon cancer. Many find comfort from online support groups.

Call your doctor if you develop new symptoms.



## How Is Colon Cancer Treated?

Treatment depends on how far the cancer spread. Abdominal and pelvic CT can tell whether it spread outside the colon. This information is important because it's used to decide the kind of treatment. Surgery is best for complete tumor removal. If cancer hasn't spread past the colon, surgery offers the best chance for cure. Even if cancer can't be cured because it spread to other parts of the body, surgery can make people more comfortable by preventing obstruction of the colon lumen by the cancer.

Medicine (chemotherapy) and radiation can be used to try to kill cancer cells not removed by surgery. Both may have side effects, including inflammation with diarrhea and bloody stools (radiation) and bone marrow problems leading to infections, bleeding, and anemia (chemotherapy).

More than one half of people with colon cancer can be cured. The success rate depends on the cancer's stage.

## DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Colon Cancer:

- ✓ **DO** make sure that after treatment, you have another colonoscopy 1 year after surgery or sooner. Colonoscopy should then be repeated regularly, or as recommended, to watch for the cancer's return.
- ✓ **DO** follow your doctor's advice.
- ✓ **DO** contact your doctor if medicine you take makes you sick.
- ✓ **DO** exercise and eat a healthy diet to reduce colon cancer risk.
- ⊗ **DON'T** forget the importance of screening for everyone, starting at age 50 or earlier for people who have family members with colon cancer.
- ⊗ **DON'T** miss follow-up appointments with all your doctors.
- ⊗ **DON'T** be afraid to ask your primary care doctor about support groups. In these groups, you can share concerns with others who were also diagnosed and treated for colon cancer.
- ⊗ **DON'T** forget the importance of good nutrition after surgery. Eat a high-fiber diet and watch your weight.
- ⊗ **DON'T** smoke.

### FROM THE DESK OF

### NOTES

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following sources:

- Colon Cancer Alliance  
Tel: (877) 422-2030  
Website: <http://www.ccalliance.org>
- American Cancer Society  
Website: <http://www.cancer.org>