

# A Guide for Patients Newly Diagnosed With Colorectal Cancer

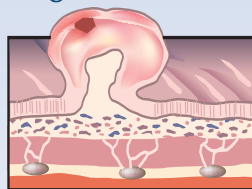
## Get to Know Your Health-Care Team



- **Surgeon:** a doctor who operates to remove the cancer
- **Gastroenterologist:** a doctor who treats diseases of the digestive system
- **Medical oncologist:** a doctor who specializes in treating cancer using drug therapies (chemotherapy) and oversees your total medical care
- **Radiation oncologist:** a doctor who specializes in treating cancer using high-energy x-rays (radiation therapy) that kill cancer cells
- **Oncology nurse:** a nurse who specializes in the education and treatment of patients with cancer

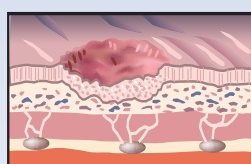
## Understanding Staging of Colorectal Cancer

### Stage I



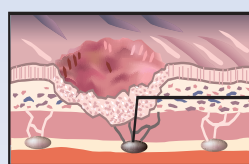
Cancer is confined to several layers of the colon or rectum (such as the top of a polyp) and has not spread outside the wall.

### Stage II



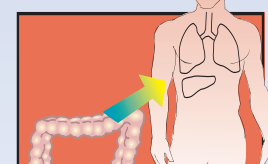
Cancer has grown through the wall of the colon or rectum, but there is no lymph node involvement.

### Stage III



Cancer has grown completely through the wall of the colon or rectum and has spread to nearby lymph nodes, but not to other parts of the body.

### Stage IV



Cancer has spread to distant organs such as the liver or the lungs.

## Understanding Your Treatment Options

- **Surgery** is the primary treatment for all stages of colorectal cancer. The goal is to remove the tumor and some of the surrounding tissue. Surgery is often a part of combination therapy that includes chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy
- **Radiation Therapy**, also called radiotherapy, uses high-energy x-rays aimed directly at the area where the cancer is located. External radiation is delivered by a special machine that directs the radiation from outside the body. Internal radiation comes from a small container of radioactive material (an implant) placed directly into or near the tumor. Some patients may have both kinds of radiation therapy. Radiation may be used in combination with chemotherapy to shrink a tumor before surgery
- **Chemotherapy** is the use of cancer-killing drugs given by mouth or intravenously (injected in a vein) to attack colorectal cancer. Chemotherapy may be given before surgery to reduce the size of a tumor (called **neoadjuvant therapy**). **Adjuvant chemotherapy** is given with radiation or after surgery to kill any remaining cancer cells present or suspected
- **Biological Therapy**, also called immunotherapy, uses the body's natural immune system to fight cancer



# A Guide for Patients Newly Diagnosed With Colorectal Cancer (cont'd)

## Finding the Best Treatment for You

Learn about your cancer, your treatment options, and the medical experts who are best qualified to treat your particular type of cancer.

### Remember:

- Learn about your cancer and compile a list of questions to ask your doctor or nurse
- Understand your treatment options and participate in your treatment decisions
- Prepare for your treatment and possible side effects
- Find strength through cancer support groups, cancer survivors, and your place of worship



## Assessing Your Treatment Options

You should feel comfortable asking your doctor where you can go to seek a second opinion. A second opinion will help you confirm the initial treatment plan, suggest other treatment options, and answer questions about the treatments presented to you.



### Key Questions to Ask Your Doctor

- What are my treatment options?
- Is chemotherapy appropriate for me?
- What is the goal of my treatment plan?
- What are the expected risks and possible side effects?
- What can I do to help manage my side effects?
- Who will be the doctor to coordinate my treatment?
- When will my treatment begin?
- How will I know if the treatment is working?
- How will my treatment affect my normal daily activities?

## Helpful Tips to Prepare for Treatment

- Maintain a healthy diet
- Drink plenty of fluids, especially water, to help eliminate toxins from your body
- Get plenty of rest. Do only the things that are most important to you
- Communicate with your health-care team. Ask questions and tell them how you are feeling

