

DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Colon Cancer

Being diagnosed with colon cancer can feel intimidating, but understanding your condition is important to help you take control of it. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Adenoma	Polyps, which are growths inside the colon, are thought to be the precursor to colon cancer, but are benign (non-cancerous), are often called adenomas.
Anus	The end of the digestive tract and the opening through which stool leaves the body.
Biopsy	During a biopsy, a small piece of tissue from the body is removed so that it can be looked at in the lab, such as under a microscope, to determine if there are any changes in the cells, such as that caused by cancer.
Carcinoma	A carcinoma is a cancerous (malignant) growth that starts out in the lining or covering of an organ but may spread to surrounding tissue and other areas of the body.
Chemotherapy	The use of one or more drugs given to stop or slow the growth of cancerous cells in the body.
Colectomy	A total colectomy is the removal of the colon, which is sometimes used as a treatment for colon cancer. When only part of the colon is removed, it may be referred to as a partial or a segmental colectomy.
Colostomy	A colostomy is created when part of the large intestine or the rectum and/or anus is removed and an opening is created in the abdomen for waste to leave the body (which is called a stoma). This may be done to treat colon cancer or, more often, rectal cancer.
Endoscopy	Endoscopy refers to a suite of tests that are used to look inside the body using a flexible tube with a light and a camera on the end. An endoscopy may be done to look down the esophagus and into the stomach or through the anus to look at the colon. Some of these tests include sigmoidoscopy, colonoscopy, esophagoscopy, upper endoscopy, and gastroscopy.
Metastasize	When cancer cells spread from the part of the body in which they originated to another organ or part of the body.
Radiation	Radiation is a type of treatment that is used for cancer. It may be done internally, by putting radioactive material into the body (such as near a tumor) or externally, through the use of a special machine.



Questions to Ask

These questions will help you start a conversation with your doctor about how to best manage your colon cancer.

About Symptoms

- Which of my current symptoms are related to colon cancer?
- When should I call you about any new symptoms or a change in current symptoms?
- Are there any symptoms which might indicate an emergency?

About Diagnosis

- What type of colon cancer do I have?
- What stage is the cancer and what does that mean?
- Could I have copies of the reports on any tests I had, or biopsies that were done?
- Is any more testing needed before starting treatment?
- Should I seek a second opinion?

About Treatment

- How often will I have doctors' appointments and are there any other specialists I should be seeing?
- What are the treatment options for this type of cancer and what are the potential side effects?
- What are my treatment goals and how will I know a treatment is working?
- Will I need surgery to treat the colon cancer and, if so, what type of surgery?
- What is my prognosis and what are my chances of survival?
- Are there any clinical trials in which I can participate?

About Coping

- What resources are available to me and my family in helping us cope with this diagnosis?
- Are there programs that can help with integrating treatment into my schedule?
