

COLON AND COLORECTAL CANCER

Colon cancer, or colorectal cancer, is a common form of cancer. It is a *malignancy* (cancerous growth) of the large intestine and rectum, or *colon*. The earlier the cancer is detected, the greater the chances for a full recovery. You are at greater risk of having colon cancer if you eat a diet high in meat, low in fiber and high in fat; have colorectal polyps or ulcerative colitis; or an immunodeficiency disorder; or a family history of colon cancer.

Symptoms *may* include:

- Recent weight loss
- Diarrhea for more than 10 days
- Bloody stools
- *Anemia* (low blood count) for no other known reason
- Lower abdominal pain or tenderness
- An *anal lump* (a lump near the rectum)
- A feeling of fullness or gas in the lower abdomen.
- A change in the *consistency* (thickness) of your stools

What *your doctor* can do:

- Diagnose colon cancer after taking your medical history, performing a physical exam, and ordering tests including a *stool guaiac* (checking the stool for blood), and a *sigmoidoscopy* or *colonoscopy* (test done with a flexible tube-like scope to visualize the colon)

Treatment may include:

- Surgical removal of the cancerous growth
- Depending on the severity of the damage caused by the cancer, part of the colon may be removed and a *colostomy* performed. A colostomy is the creation of a hole (*stoma*) in the abdominal wall where the remaining intestine is attached and stool is passed through. the stool is then collected in a special appliance or bag worn outside the body
- Radiation therapy may be performed before and/or after surgery

What *you* can do:

- Eat a diet low in meat, high in fiber, and low in fat
- Have an annual screening of rectum and colon and a stool check for blood every 2-3 months if you are at high risk.
- For more information contact the American Cancer Society @ 1-800-ACS-2345.

What *you* can expect:

- With early diagnosis and treatment, the overall outlook is good.
- Possible complications include returning (*recurrence*) of the cancer.
- Spreading (*metastasis*) to other organs or areas of the body.

Contact your doctor if you have any of the warning signs of colon cancer; or if you have a family history of colon cancer and have not had a physical in the last year.