

[Home](#) > [Types of Cancer](#) > [Colorectal Cancer](#) > Colorectal Cancer - Questions to Ask the Doctor

PDF generated on July 21, 2016 from <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/colorectal-cancer/questions-ask-doctor>

[Colorectal Cancer - Questions to Ask the Doctor](#) [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 08/2015

ON THIS PAGE: You will find some questions to ask your doctor or other members of your health care team, to help you better understand your diagnosis, treatment plan, and overall care. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen.

[Talking often with the doctor is important](#) [3] to make informed decisions about your health care. These suggested questions are a starting point to help you learn more about your cancer care and treatment. You are also encouraged to ask additional questions that are important to you. You may want to print this list and bring it to your next appointment, or [download Cancer.Net's free mobile app](#) [4] for an e-list and other interactive tools to manage your care.

Questions to ask about choosing a treatment and managing side effects

- What are my treatment options based on my diagnosis?
- What clinical trials are open to me? Where are they located, and how do I find out more about them?
- What treatment plan do you recommend? Why?
- What is the goal of each treatment? Is it to eliminate the cancer, help me feel better, or both?

- Who will be part of my health care team, and what does each member do?
- Who will be coordinating my overall treatment?
- What are the risks and possible side effects of each treatment, both in the short term and the long term?
- How will this treatment affect my daily life? Will I be able to work, exercise, and perform my usual activities?
- Could this treatment affect my sex life? If so, how and for how long?
- Could this treatment affect my ability to become pregnant or have children? If so, should I talk with a fertility specialist before cancer treatment begins?
- If I'm worried about managing the costs related to my cancer care, who can help me with these concerns?
- What support services are available to me? To my family?
- Whom should I call for questions or problems?

Questions to ask before surgery

- Where exactly is the cancer located?
- What do you know about my cancer at this point?
- If I have rectal cancer, should I have radiation therapy and chemotherapy before my rectal cancer surgery?
- What other tests will be done before surgery?
- Can you describe the surgery I will be having?

- What are you planning to remove during surgery (the colon, rectum, lymph nodes)?
- Is a biopsy part of the surgery?
- How soon after surgery will I have all test results and a firm diagnosis?
- Do you think I may need a temporary or permanent colostomy?
- Is this the standard type of surgery for my condition?
- How many times have you performed this type of operation successfully?
- Who will give me information about how I should get ready for surgery and a hospital stay?
How long will I be in the hospital?
- How will my pain be controlled after surgery?
- What other side effects are possible with this type of surgery?

Questions to ask after surgery

- What is my diagnosis based on the results of surgery and biopsy reports, in TNM format?
- Can you explain my pathology report (laboratory test results) to me?
- Did the pathologist test my tumor for a possible genetic cause? Do I need more genetic counseling or testing?
- What is my prognosis?
- How will additional treatment after surgery affect my prognosis?
- What additional treatment do you recommend? Why?

- What is the goal of each treatment?
- Is it a standard treatment or part of a clinical trial?
- How long will it be before I can go back to work after surgery?
- If I needed a colostomy, will you refer me to a specially trained nurse to decide on the best place for my colostomy and help me learn to manage it after the surgery?
- Does my diagnosis mean that my relatives have a higher risk of colorectal cancer? Should they talk with their doctors about screening?

Questions to ask about having radiation therapy, chemotherapy, or targeted therapy

- What type of treatment is recommended?
- What is the goal of this treatment?
- How long will it take to give this treatment?
- What side effects can I expect during treatment?
- What are the possible long-term effects of having this treatment?
- What can be done to relieve the side effects?

Questions to ask about planning follow-up care

- What is the risk of the cancer returning? Are there signs and symptoms I should watch for?
- What long-term side effects or late effects are possible based on the cancer treatment I received?

- What follow-up tests will I need, and how often will I need them?
- How do I get a treatment summary and survivorship care plan to keep in my personal records?
- Who will be coordinating my follow-up care?
- What survivorship support services are available to me? To my family?

The [next section in this guide is Additional Resources](#) [5], and it offers some more resources on this website beyond this guide that may be helpful to you. Or, use the menu on the side of your screen to choose another section to continue reading this guide.

Links

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/colorectal-cancer/questions-ask-doctor>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24958>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/29951>

[5] <http://www.cancer.net/node/18714>