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Cetuximab Does Not Increase Survival for Some People With Advanced Colon Cancer

In this study, patients with stage III colon cancer and a normal *KRAS* gene who received the targeted therapy drug cetuximab (Erbitux) and standard chemotherapy did not live longer than patients who received only standard chemotherapy. In addition, patients who received cetuximab had more side effects. *KRAS* is a gene that controls tumor growth and spread. A previous study showed that cetuximab improves the effectiveness of chemotherapy for patients with metastatic colon cancer (colon cancer that has spread to other parts of the body) and a normal *KRAS* gene but not for patients with a mutated (changed) *KRAS* gene.

What this means for patients

?This is a disappointing result. Given past success for people with more advanced colon cancer, we had expected cetuximab to work for patients with stage III colon cancer. This study shows that it didn't, and that this treatment should not be used for these patients,? said lead researcher Steven Alberts, MD, Professor of Oncology at the Mayo Clinic College of Medicine in Rochester, Minnesota.

What to Ask Your Doctor

- What stage of colon cancer do I have? What does this mean?
- Will the *KRAS* gene of the tumor be tested? If so, how will the results affect treatment?
- What are my treatment options?
- What clinical trials are open to me?

For More Information

Guide to Colorectal Cancer [1]

ASCO Answers Fact Sheet: Colorectal Cancer [2]

Understanding Targeted Treatments [3]

KRAS Testing in People with Colorectal Cancer [4]

Facts About Personalized Cancer Medicine [5]

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/patient/Cancer+Types/Colorectal+Cancer
[2] http://www.cancer.net/sites/cancer.net/files/vignette/ASCO_Answers_Colorectal.pdf
[3] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Cancer.Net+Feature+Articles/Treatments%2C+Tests%2C+and+Procedures/Understanding+Targeted+Treatments
[4] http://www.cancer.net/vgn-ext-templating/v/index.jsp?vgnextoid=8cf6ed4f58340210VgnVCM100000ed730ad1RCRD
[5] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Cancer.Net+Feature+Articles/Treatments%2C+Tests%2C+and+Procedures/Facts+About+Personalized+Cancer+Medicine