

Questions to ask your doctor about treatment

Treatment for colorectal cancer depends mainly on the location of the tumor in the colon or rectum and the stage of the disease. Treatment may involve surgery, chemotherapy/biological therapy, or radiation therapy. Some people have a combination of treatments. Treatment for colon cancer is sometimes different from treatment for rectal cancer.

GENERAL

- What is the stage of my disease? If my cancer has spread, where has it spread to?
- What are my treatment options? Will I have more than one kind of treatment?
- Where will I go for treatment?
- What are the risks and possible side effects of each treatment? How can the side effects be managed?
- What can I do to prepare?
- How will treatment affect my normal activities? Am I likely to have urinary problems? What about bowel problems, such as diarrhea or rectal bleeding?
- Will treatment affect my sex life? How might treatment impact fertility?
- What will the treatment cost? Is this treatment covered by my insurance plan?
- What support resources are available to help with finances, managing side effects, and such? Do you have a social worker and/or peer navigator to help me?

SURGERY

- Should I have surgery before or after chemo and/or radiation?
- Has my situation been discussed by all the doctors that will be treating me—radiologist, oncologist, surgeon?
- What kind of operation do you recommend for me?
- Am I a candidate for minimally invasive or laparoscopic surgery? Do you perform this type of surgery?
- How many lymph nodes do you plan on removing? Will other tissues be removed? Why?
- Will I have any lasting side effects?
- Will I need a colostomy? If so, will it be permanent?
- How will I feel after the operation?
- If I have pain, how will it be controlled?
- How long will I be in the hospital?
- When can I get back to my normal activities?
- How long should I take off from work?

CHEMO, RADIATION, OR BIOLOGICAL THERAPY

- What drugs will I have? What will they do? Why are you choosing them?
- How often will I have treatments?
- How will I feel during treatment?
- Where will I go for treatment? Will I be able to drive home?
- What can I do to take care of myself during treatment?
- How will we know treatment is working?
- Which side effects should I tell you about?
- Will there be long-term effects?
- If these don't work, what do we do next?

[ccalliance.org](https://www.ccalliance.org) | Helpline: (877) 422-2030

The Colorectal Cancer Alliance is a national organization committed to ending colorectal cancer within our lifetime. We are your allies — a national network of passionate survivors, caregivers and advocates dedicated to helping you and your family navigate all aspects of the disease, from diagnosis and treatment to a lifetime of progression-free survival. We are a community of people eager to share experiences, address your concerns, and answer your questions. We understand the different stages of the colorectal cancer journey because we've been there. We are here for you when you need us because we believe tomorrow can't wait.

