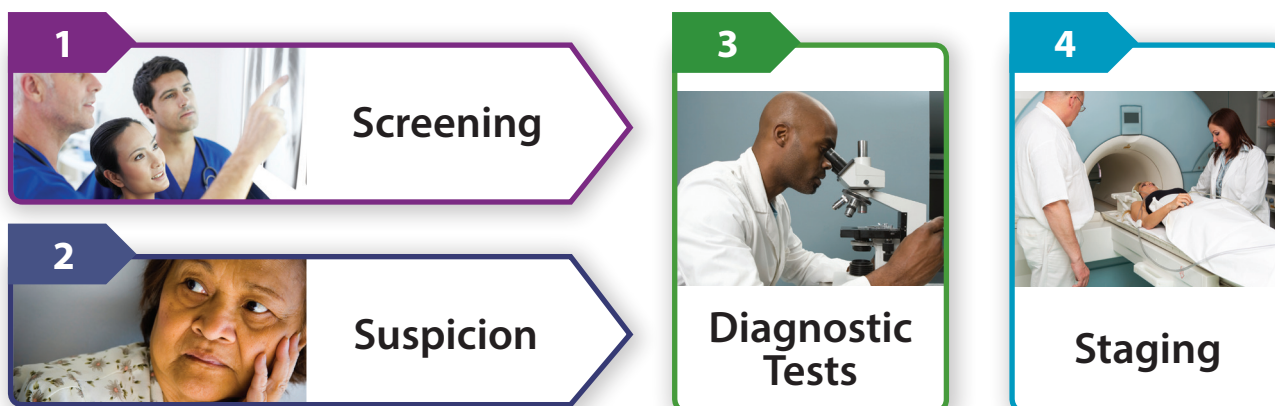


Patient Pathway

Is It Colorectal Cancer?

A pathway
map of your
colorectal cancer
journey

A **Patient Pathway** is a way for you to learn about your journey and what to expect as you move through the health care system. This pathway will guide you through the four main steps to find out whether you do or do not have colorectal (large bowel) cancer. The four steps in this pathway are Screening, Suspicion, Diagnostic Tests and Staging. Each person's journey will be different and may or may not follow all of the steps in this pathway.



To view this pathway online, please visit www.cancercare.on.ca/patientpathway

💡 **Resources** and **Tips** can be found on the last page of this pathway (Page 6). On this page you will find credible websites related to colorectal cancer and important things to think about throughout your journey.

The Patient Pathway – Is It Colorectal Cancer? (Pathway) is to be used for informational purposes only. It is not a substitute for medical advice or for a health care provider. You should always consult a doctor or nurse if you have any questions regarding the information set out in the Pathway. All of the steps outlined here are subject to clinical judgment and your journey may not follow the proposed steps set out in the Pathway. The information in the Pathway does not create a doctor-patient relationship between Cancer Care Ontario (CCO) and you.

1

Screening



Screening aims to find growths before they become cancerous or to find cancer early before symptoms appear.

If you have symptoms or would like to learn about the symptoms of colorectal cancer, go to Suspicion (Page 3).

What should I do to get screened?

Contact your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. If you do not have a doctor, nurse or pharmacist, contact Telehealth Ontario (see Page 6 for contact information). They will ask you a series of questions to assess your risk of colorectal cancer and to decide on your screening process.

If you have NO symptoms, you will fall into one of these TWO categories:

1. Average Risk:

- You do not have a parent, sibling or child who has had colorectal cancer
- You are between 50 and 74 years old

What are the next steps?

You will be given a **Fecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT)** to take home and complete. A FOBT is a simple test that finds hidden blood in a stool sample.

- If the FOBT does not find blood: repeat this test every 2 years.
- If the FOBT finds blood: you will have more tests done. You will likely be sent for a colonoscopy.

2. Increased Risk:

- You have one or more parents, siblings or children who has had colorectal cancer
- You are between 50 and 74 years old OR you are 10 years younger than the earliest age of diagnosis of the family member who had colorectal cancer

What are the next steps?

You will be sent for a **colonoscopy** for screening purposes. To learn more about this test, go to Diagnostic Tests (Page 4).

- If the colonoscopy does not find something abnormal: repeat this test every 5 to 10 years.
- If the colonoscopy finds something abnormal: you will have more tests done.

Go to Diagnostic Tests (Page 4)

Go to Diagnostic Tests (Page 4)

2

Suspicion

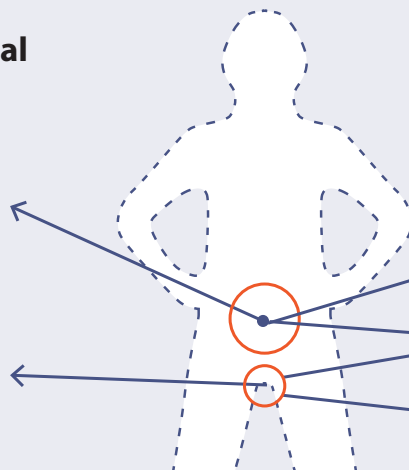


Suspicion is when you have symptoms that could be caused by colorectal cancer.

Symptoms of colorectal cancer may be:

Change in bowel habits

Itching, discomfort or soreness, lumpiness or swelling, or general pain in the pelvic area



Unexplained weight loss

Feeling very tired or weak

Abdominal discomfort

Swelling or lump in the abdomen

Passing blood from the bowels

What if I have symptoms?

Speak with your doctor or nurse about your symptoms. If you do not have a doctor or nurse, contact Telehealth Ontario (see Page 6 for contact information). You will have a physical exam and may be sent for blood work or for more tests to find out whether the symptoms are due to cancer or some other cause. Based on this, you will fall into one of these TWO categories:

1.

Your doctor DOES NOT suspect colorectal cancer:

What are the next steps?

- Your doctor will suggest treatment for your symptoms OR
- You and your doctor will determine what follow up is best for you

2.

Your doctor DOES suspect colorectal cancer:

What are the next steps?

- Your doctor will send you to a specialist for diagnostic tests

Go to Diagnostic Tests (Page 4)

3

Diagnostic Tests



Diagnostic Tests are tools used by your specialist to take a closer look at your large bowel and to make a diagnosis of colorectal cancer or other disease.

These tests will be done if:

- You have symptoms of colorectal cancer OR
- Your doctor is suspicious of colorectal cancer OR
- Results from your screening or other tests suggest problems with your large bowel

These diagnostic tests may include:

● Colonoscopy:

A test that uses a camera at the end of a bendable tube to look at the lining of your colon and rectum.

● CT Colonography or Virtual Colonoscopy:

A test that uses x-rays and computers to create pictures of your colon and rectum.

● Barium enema:

A test that puts a dye that shows up on x-rays into your large bowel to create pictures of your colon and rectum.

If NO cancer is found

What are the next steps?

- Your specialist may order more tests OR suggest treatments

If cancer is found

What are the next steps?

- You and your specialist need to decide what treatment is best for you.

Go to Staging (Page 5)

4

Staging



Staging aims to help you and your doctor decide what treatment is best for you. Staging describes how much the colorectal cancer has grown and if it has spread to lymph nodes or other parts of your body. Your doctor will explain the stage of your cancer.

Tests to help determine the stage of your cancer may include:

● Chest X-ray:

A test that uses x-rays to take pictures of your lungs and other organs in your chest.

● Ultrasound:

A test that uses sound waves to create pictures of organs and structures inside your body.

● Computed Tomography (CT) Scan:

A test that uses a computer to create 3-dimensional pictures of areas inside your body from a set of x-rays.

● Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI):

A test that uses radio waves and a powerful magnet linked to a computer to create detailed pictures of areas inside your body.

What are the next steps?

Once you and your doctor know the stage of your colorectal cancer, you and your doctor will decide what treatment is best for you.



Resources

If you are looking at this on a computer, you can click on the underlined words below to go to the resource web page.

What is Colorectal Cancer?

By: Canadian Cancer Society

This web page has information about colorectal cancer

Telephone number for Cancer Information Service: 1-888-939-3333

Resources for Patients and Families

By: Canadian Partnership Against Cancer (CPAC)

This web page has links to resources for patients and families

ColonCancerCheck

By: Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; Cancer Care Ontario

This web page has information about colorectal cancer and the ColonCancerCheck screening program

Telephone INFOline: 1-866-410-5853

Telehealth Ontario

By: Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

This web page has information about the Telehealth Ontario program

If you would like to get screened and do not have a doctor, call the colorectal cancer screening telephone number: 1-866-828-9213

If you have symptoms and do not have a doctor, call the general telephone number: 1-866-797-0000

Tips

Important things to think about:

- Check with your doctor's office to see how long your appointment is going to be
- Bring a list of recent changes to your health and wellbeing
- Have a list of your questions and concerns
- Bring a list of the medications you are taking
- Bring a family member or friend for support or to take notes
- Tell your doctor or nurse about how you are feeling and any changes to your health

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