



# NCCN QUICK GUIDE™ Colon Cancer

This NCCN QUICK GUIDE™ sheet summarizes key points from the complete [NCCN Guidelines for Patients®: Colon Cancer](#). These guidelines explain which tests and treatments are recommended by experts in cancer. To view and download the guidelines, visit [NCCN.org/patients](#) or, to order printed copies, visit [Amazon.com](#)

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## What is colon cancer?

The colon is part of the large intestine, which is part of the digestive system. Cancer can form in growths called polyps on the inside of the colon. If not found and treated early enough, cancer can grow through the colon wall and into other areas of the body.	<a href="#">8</a>
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## How is colon cancer staged?

The following key pieces of information are used to give colon cancer a stage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How far cancer has grown through the colon wall</li> <li>■ Whether there is cancer in nearby lymph nodes</li> <li>■ Whether the cancer has spread to areas far from the colon (metastasized)</li> </ul>	<a href="#">12</a>
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## Who is at increased risk of colon cancer?

People with Lynch syndrome (also called hereditary non-polyposis colon cancer) or FAP (familial adenomatous polyposis) are at high risk of getting colon cancer.	<a href="#">15</a>
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## Will I need tests before treatment?

<b>For everyone with colon cancer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Complete physical exam and health history</li> <li>■ Colonoscopy</li> <li>■ Biopsy</li> <li>■ Testing for mismatch repair (MMR)/microsatellite instability (MSI) gene mutations</li> </ul>	<a href="#">13</a>
<b>For some people with colon cancer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Blood tests (complete blood count [CBC], chemistry profile, carcinoembryonic antigen [CEA])</li> <li>■ Imaging tests (computed tomography [CT], magnetic resonance imaging [MRI])</li> <li>■ Testing for <i>KRAS/NRAS</i> and <i>BRAF</i> gene mutations</li> </ul>	<a href="#">13</a>



## How is colon cancer treated?

<b>Surgery</b>	Colon cancer is often removed with a surgery called colectomy. The surgery removes the part of the colon that has cancer. The two ends of the remaining colon are then attached to each other.	<a href="#">24</a>
<b>Chemotherapy</b>	Chemotherapy is treatment with drugs to kill cancer cells throughout the body. Commonly used chemotherapy drugs for colon cancer include leucovorin, fluorouracil, irinotecan, oxaliplatin, capecitabine, trifluridine, and tipiracil.	<a href="#">26</a>
<b>Targeted therapy</b>	Targeted therapy is a type of cancer treatment that can target—and attack—specific kinds of cancer cells. Used to treat some colon cancers that have spread to other parts of the body and/or can't be removed with surgery.	<a href="#">28</a>
<b>Immunotherapy</b>	Immunotherapy increases the activity of your immune system to help find and destroy cancer cells. Drugs called checkpoint inhibitors are a type of immunotherapy used to treat colon cancer. Not everyone will benefit from immunotherapy.	<a href="#">29</a>
<b>Radiation therapy</b>	Radiation therapy uses high-energy, highly focused rays to treat cancer. Most often, EBRT (external beam radiation therapy) is the method used to treat colon cancer. This method delivers radiation from outside your body using a large machine.	<a href="#">30</a>

## How do I decide between treatment options?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Don't be shy about asking your doctors questions. They are there to help.</li> <li>■ Getting a second opinion is encouraged. Even doctors get second opinions!</li> <li>■ Support groups can be helpful. You can learn a lot from others with colon cancer.</li> <li>■ Take the time to compare the pros and cons of treatment options.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">69</a>
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