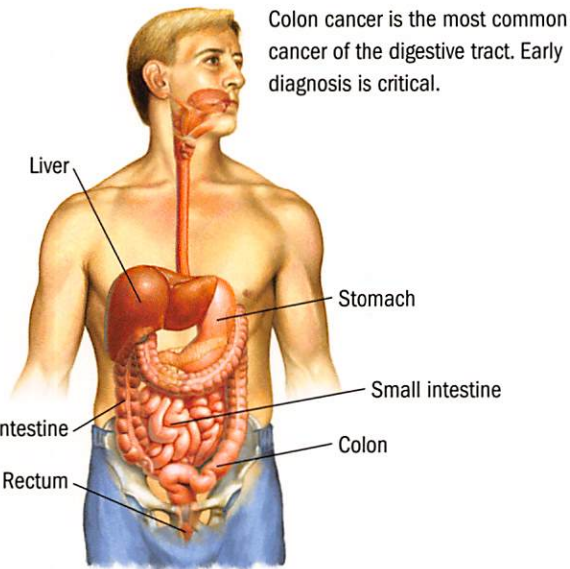


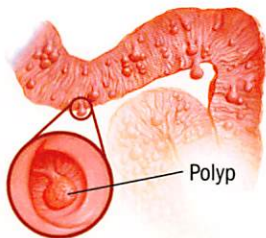
COLON CANCER SCREENING AND PREVENTION



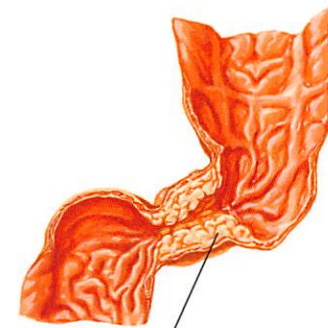
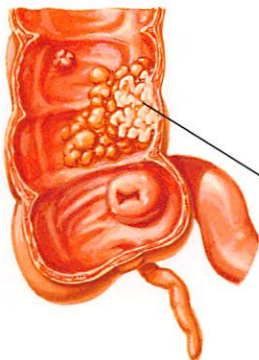
Change in bowel habits, stool appearance, or pain may be the first symptoms of colon cancer, but sometimes there are no symptoms.



Chronic low-grade bleeding may lead to anemia (low blood).



The cancer usually starts as a polyp, but some polyps are harmless.



If left untreated, colon cancer can spread through the intestine wall to the liver and other areas of the body.

What Is the Colon?

The colon is part of the digestive system. Food moves from the mouth to the stomach. Several hours later, it moves into the intestines, first the small intestine and then the large intestine. After digestion of food is finished, what's left leaves the body as waste (stool) through the rectum. The colon is the last part of the large intestine, just before the rectum.

What Is Colon Cancer?

Colon cancer is a tumor in the colon. It is the most common cancer of the digestive tract. Other names are adenocarcinoma of the colon and colorectal cancer (often the lower rectum and sigmoid part of the colon are involved). The cancer can also be found in the first part of the colon (cecum). Colon cancer can also spread (metastasize) to other parts of the body.

Colon cancer usually starts as a small growth (polyp) on the surface of the colon. Some polyps are harmless, but some can turn into cancer.

What Are Symptoms of Colon Cancer?

Symptoms to be aware of are a change in bowel habits, such as constipation or diarrhea, a change in stool size (e.g., pencil-thin) or stool appearance (e.g., black and tarry), rectal bleeding, and abdominal pain.

Sometimes no symptoms are present, but iron deficiency anemia from long-term blood loss may occur.

Early diagnosis is critical because undetected or untreated cancer usually spreads through the intestine wall into neighboring areas and into the liver. Sometimes it can also spread to lungs and bones.