

Colon & Rectal Cancer

A cancer diagnosis can be life-changing, but with the right medical support, you can carefully manage your condition and overcome it.

The team at Huntington Colorectal Surgeons are reputed colorectal cancer specialists in the San Gabriel Valley. Our lead surgeon - Dr. Howard Kaufman – in particular, has considerable experience in the diagnosis and treatment of colon cancer and rectal cancer. He has directed leading cancer committees in California. You can trust him for timely cancer care.

Please visit our Pasadena colorectal cancer care center for treatment.

What is colon cancer & rectal cancer?

Colon cancer is cancer that occurs in the colon (the large intestine). Rectal cancer is cancer that occurs in the rectum – which is the bag-like organ that holds fecal matter before defecation.

Who is at risk for colorectal cancer?

Cancers develop when cellular activity in the human body goes awry. Usually, cells divide and form new cells when existing cells need to be replaced. Sometimes, your cells start to divide at a very fast pace, even when there is no need for new cells. These extra cells clump together and form deposits. If these deposits spread to other areas, they're called malignant tumors. This condition is called cancer.

Colorectal cancers occur in the same way. Your risk of developing colon & rectal cancer increases if you:

- Are over the age of 50.
- Have a genetic history of colorectal cancer in the family.
- Are diagnosed with inflammatory bowel disease.
- Have been diagnosed with other forms of cancer (risk of metastasis is high).
- Have a diet that is high in sugar, fat, and processed meat; and low in fruits and vegetables.
- Are obese.
- Have a low physical activity.
- Are a chain smoker or heavy drinker.
- Are of Hispanic or African descent (these cancers are more common in these ethnic groups).

Survival rates for colon & rectal cancers

If diagnosed at the localized stage, when cancer hasn't spread beyond the colon or the rectum, the survival rates for both colon cancer & rectal cancer stand at 90% and 89% respectively. Thanks to the myriad advancements in medical science, it's become very easy to identify the early signs of colorectal cancer.

Our team at Huntington Colorectal Surgeons, led by Dr. Howard Kaufman, Dr. Gabriel Akopian and Dr. Julianne Golan, will be with you every step of the way. We have extensive experience working with patients of all ages, genders, and races. We use state-of-the-art technology to evaluate your health, diagnose your condition, and get you onto the right treatment quickly, to help you recover faster.

Signs of cancer in the colon & rectum

Time is of the essence when it comes to treating colon & rectal cancer. Please visit our Pasadena colorectal cancer care center if you notice the following symptoms:

- Sudden & persistent change in your bowel movements, like chronic diarrhea or constipation.
- Severe abdominal pain and cramping.
- Pain in the rectum during defecation.
- Bleeding during defecation or blood in stools.
- Feeling of fullness in the bowels, despite regular bowel movement.
- Sudden weight loss.
- Excessive weakness & fatigue.
- The narrow shape of stool.
- Frequent gas.
- Nausea & vomiting.
- Iron deficiency anemia.

Types of colorectal cancers

Depending on where they are formed, colon & rectal cancers can be classified into five types:

- **Colorectal adenocarcinoma**

Adenocarcinomas are tumors that occur in the mucous-lining of organs. These occur on the inner wall/lining of the colon, rectum, or both. This is the most common type of colorectal cancer, accounting for 95% of all cases.

- **Gastrointestinal stromal tumors**

These are soft tissue sarcomas that usually occur in the gastrointestinal tract. They are common in the small intestine and the rectum, but they rarely form in the colon.

- **Primary colorectal lymphomas**

Lymphoma is cancer that occurs in the lymphocytes, which are a type of white blood cells that provide immunity to the body. Since the lymphatic system works with the digestive system to absorb lipids, this type of cancer can sometimes form in the gastrointestinal tract. This is a very rare colorectal cancer affecting only 0.5% of patients.

- **Gastrointestinal carcinoid tumors**

This is cancer that develops in the neuroendocrine cells, which are nerve cells that control hormones' production. They are usually found in the cells of the small intestine. However, 1% of colorectal tumors are gastrointestinal carcinoid tumors.

- **Leiomyosarcomas**

This is a type of cancer that affects smooth muscles. Both the colon and rectum have different layers of muscles that facilitate waste movement to the anus. In very rare cases, this layer of muscle can develop leiomyosarcomas.

Our colorectal cancer specialists at Huntington Colorectal Surgeons have experience treating all types of colorectal cancers. You can trust us for premium-quality care.

Stages of colorectal cancer

Knowing which stage your cancer diagnosis is, will give you the information you need to make lifestyle changes that can supplement the cancer treatment.

Colon & rectal cancers pass through five stages:

- **Stage 0** – At this early stage, a small number of abnormal cells are present on the inner lining of the colon/rectum.
- **Stage 1** – During this stage, the colon/rectum cancer will have permeated the colon/rectum's lining and may have affected the muscle inside.
- **Stage 2** – At this stage, the cancerous tumors will have moved deeper into the colon/rectum walls. Most of the colon/rectum might be affected, but the nearby lymph nodes will still be healthy.
- **Stage 3** – During this stage, the colon/rectum cancer will have spread to the lymph nodes in the colorectal region.
- **Stage 4** – At this stage, the colon/rectum cancer has metastasized and spread to other parts of the body.

At Huntington Colorectal Surgeons, our specialists monitor cancer progression very carefully to ensure that the right treatments are being administered at the right time. Our priority is to prevent the progression of colorectal cancer to the later stages and to curb the disease at the early stage.

Diagnosing colon cancer & rectal cancer

At our Pasadena colorectal cancer care facility, we conduct a comprehensive medical evaluation of your colorectal and gastrointestinal regions to identify tumors' presence.

We recommend that you come in for annual check-ups after the age of 50. We use a combination of techniques such as sigmoidoscopy, blood & stool tests, gFOBT test, FIT, and scanning to diagnose cancer.

We then schedule a biopsy to check how aggressive the cancer is, what stage it is in, and where it has originated from – the colon or rectum.

Treatments for colon & rectal cancer

Our priority during the treatment is to prevent the spread of cancer to other regions of the gastrointestinal tract. For this, we conduct surgery to remove the cancerous tumors on the colon/rectum. If cancer has spread to other parts of the bowel, the entire cancerous section will be resected.

In the case of colon cancer, if a portion of the healthy colon remains, it will be attached to the healthy rectum. If there is very limited healthy colon tissue to work with, our surgeons will perform a colostomy. Here, we create a stoma on your abdominal wall, to which a bag will be attached, to collect the feces.

In the case of rectal cancer; we perform a low anterior resection, where the cancerous portion of the rectum, along with the affected lymph nodes, will be removed. Our treatments are sphincter-sparing, preserving the anal sphincters and the anus, allowing you to retain the ability to perform normal bowel movements post-surgery.

DaVinci robotic surgery minimizes your surgical risk and improves recovery

At Huntington Colorectal Surgeons, we specialize in robotic surgery. We use the state-of-the-art DaVinci robotic surgical system to perform surgeries to treat both colon and rectal cancers.

The DaVinci system provides our surgeons with a close-up 3D view of the treatment site, allowing us to customize the surgery to suit your express needs. The instruments can be controlled using a specialized control pad. The surgical instruments mimic the human hand's movement, thereby limiting any risk during the surgery and offering the most targeted results.

The DaVinci system comes with a cutting-edge patient cart that makes available the right instruments, in response to our surgeons' real-time hand movements and surgical needs. The system's specialized vision feature facilitates the smooth operation of the DaVinci system, ensuring the best surgical outcomes.

This cutting-edge system is designed to ensure the removal of all cancerous tumors in your body. Our surgeons understand the challenges of a cancer diagnosis and we do everything in our power to make the surgical experience as comfortable for you as possible.

Alternative treatments

If surgery isn't right for you, we schedule chemotherapy or radiation therapy. The duration of these therapies depends on your unique medical needs. We combine these treatments with medication, which helps alleviate your symptoms and facilitate cancer remission.

If you have any questions about our treatment, feel free to speak to us.

Sources:

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