

Patient information from BMJ

Last published: Jul 10, 2020

Bowel cancer: questions to ask your doctor

If you've been diagnosed with bowel cancer (colon or rectal cancer), you may want to talk to your doctor to find out more.

Here are some questions that **you might want to ask before surgery.**

- Will I need surgery?
- If I need surgery, what will this involve? What will be removed?
- Will I need to have radiation therapy before the operation?
- Will my surgeon be someone who has a lot of experience with this operation?
- Will I need to have a colostomy? If so, will it be permanent?
- Will I need any treatment after surgery?
- How long will it take me to recover after surgery?
- Is my family at higher risk of getting this type of cancer?
- Is there anything my family should be doing to protect themselves against this type of cancer?
- Will I need to have chemotherapy after surgery?
- Should I be taking any medications to stop my cancer from coming back?
- Will my treatment cure my cancer? How will you know if I'm cured?

Here are some questions that **you might want to ask after surgery.**

- How far has the cancer spread? Has it reached other organs or is it just in the colon or rectum?
- What stage is the cancer?
- Do any of my lymph nodes have cancer cells in them? If so, how many nodes have cancer cells?
- Is my cancer likely to come back?

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