

Your Follow-up Care after Colorectal Cancer

For Well Follow-Up Patients and Families

Introduction

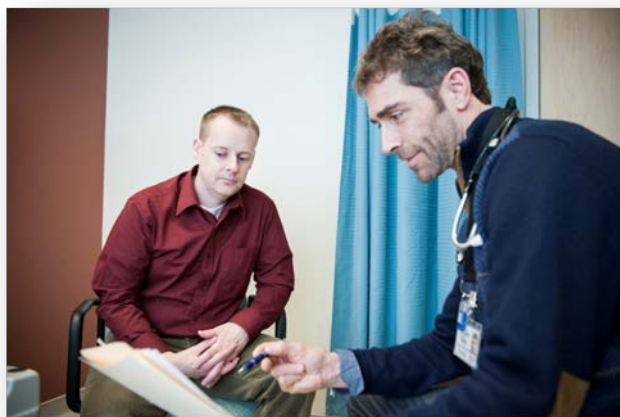
You have now completed treatment for colorectal cancer at the South East Regional Cancer Program. No further cancer treatment is required at this time. However, you will still need regular medical check-ups and tests. These regular medical check-ups and tests are called follow-up care. The purpose of follow-up care is to:

- Check for possible recurrence of cancer
- Manage any ongoing problems due to cancer and its treatment
- Provide emotional support and information
- Prevent or detect other types of cancer early

This handout summarizes what to expect with future care after your colorectal cancer treatment and provides information on helpful resources. We hope this helps you feel prepared for transitioning to follow-up care.

Your follow-up care

Your follow-up care will now be transferred to your primary care provider (your family doctor or nurse practitioner). A detailed report of your cancer care and follow-up recommendations has been sent to your primary care provider.



IMPORTANT: It is your responsibility to arrange your follow-up visits with your primary care provider. Please book your 1st follow-up visit within the next 6 months.

You are still a registered patient of the South East Regional Cancer Program. The transfer of your follow-up care to your primary care provider means that we feel you are doing well. If there are any concerns about cancer recurrence, you will be referred back to the cancer care team at the Cancer Centre.

Your recommended follow-up care plan

Test	Frequency of tests (how often)		Next due date (you can fill in)
	First 3 Years	Years 4-5	
Medical history and physical exam (check-up) by your primary care provider	Every 6 months	Annually	_____ _____ _____
Serum CEA blood test	Every 6 months	Annually	_____ _____ _____
CT Scan of your chest, abdomen and pelvis	Annually	Annually	_____ _____ _____
Colonoscopy	This is usually arranged by your cancer surgeon within 1 year after surgery. How often you need future colonoscopies is based on findings of the previous one. In general a colonoscopy will be done every 3-5 years.		_____ _____ _____ _____

Health problems to report to your primary care provider

If you have any new or ongoing symptoms that are getting worse, please tell your primary care provider without waiting for your next follow-up appointment. These symptoms may or may not be related to cancer but it is still important to have them checked. Symptoms include:

- Abdominal pain
- Gas or bloating
- Unexplained weight loss
- Pelvic pain
- Sciatica
- Difficulty with urination or defecation
- Rectal bleeding
- Altered bowel habits
- Dry cough
- Nausea
- Fatigue
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Sexual difficulties
- Infertility
- Bone fracture

What are some common issues after cancer treatment?

Adjusting to life after treatment is different for everyone. However, there are some common issues that people encounter after cancer treatment. These include:

- Fatigue or sleep problems
- Fear of cancer coming back
- Coping with stress
- Sexual difficulty
- Managing difficult emotions
- Long-term effects of treatment
- Pain
- Living with uncertainty
- Financial concerns
- Returning to work

Talk to your primary care provider if you have any concerns or questions about ongoing physical or emotional problems. If you need help coping with emotional or financial issues, your primary care provider can refer you to a counsellor.

Healthy living after cancer treatment

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle after cancer treatment can help you regain strength, reduce side effects, manage stress and lower the risk of other health problems.

Talk to your primary care provider about what you can do to look after your health after cancer treatment.

Questions to ask about your follow-up care

You are an important member of your health care team. Remember to keep asking questions until you understand what you need to do to take care of yourself. Here are some questions you should ask:

- What follow-up care should I have now that my cancer treatment is finished?
- How often should I see my doctor?
- What should I discuss with my doctor during follow-up visits?
- What signs and symptoms I should watch for?
- When should I seek medical advice?
- How can I cope with my fear of cancer coming back?
- Should I change my lifestyle?
- Where can I get more information about cancer survivorship?
- What do I do if I find something new and am worried the cancer has returned?

Patient and family resources after colorectal cancer treatment

Information Sources

- **Patient and Family Resource Centre, Cancer Centre of Southeastern Ontario at Kingston General Hospital.** Located near the King Street entrance on the ground level of the Burr Wing (Burr 0). Find free pamphlets or borrow books, audiobooks and DVDs. Computers linked to the Internet are also available for your use.
- **Canadian Cancer Society's Cancer Information Service.** Provides general information over the telephone in English and French. Phone 1-888-939-3333.



Community Support

- **Colorectal Cancer Coach Program** (Colorectal Cancer Association of Canada). Trained and certified volunteers assist and respond to colorectal cancer-related inquiries from across the country. Volunteers are people who have been affected by colorectal cancer or a healthcare worker with experience in cancer. Email info@colorectal-cancer.ca or call 1-877-50-COLON.

Booklets and Pamphlets

- **Life after Cancer: A guide for cancer survivors.** Published by the Canadian Cancer Society. Available in English and French online at www.cancer.ca.
- **Support, knowledge, hope** (Colorectal Cancer Association of Canada). A good reference guide for people with colorectal cancer.

Selected Books

- **100 Questions & Answers About Life After Cancer: A Survivor's Guide**, by Page Tolbert and Penny Damaskos (2008).
- **Surviving After Cancer: Living the New Normal**, by Anne Katz (2011).

Websites

- Colorectal Cancer Association of Canada - www.colorectal-cancer.ca
- Canadian Cancer Society - <http://www.cancer.ca/>
- Cancer Net - <http://www.ascocancerfoundation.org/patient/Survivorship>
- Livestrong - <http://www.livestrong.org>
- National Cancer Institute - <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/life-after-treatment>