

Your Guide to the Colorectal Diagnostic Assessment Program (CDAP)

Patient and Family Information Guide

Your health care provider has referred you to our Colorectal Diagnostic Assessment Program (CDAP) to help you learn more about your health problem. We know that waiting during this time is difficult, and that you may be feeling anxious or worried. We are here to help.

Questions answered in this guide:

- **What is the Colorectal Diagnostic Assessment Program (CDAP)?**
- **What is a Patient Navigator?**
- **What are the common tests?**
- **What should I expect at my specialist appointment?**
- **What resources and support services are available to me?**

What is the Colorectal Diagnostic Assessment (CDAP) Program?

The Colorectal Diagnostic Assessment Program (CDAP) provides care to people who are at suspicion for colorectal cancer or who have a confirmed diagnosis.

Diagnostic Assessment Programs (DAP) are intended to:

- Help coordinate your care
- Reduce wait times for diagnostic tests and appointments
- Prepare and support you while you undergo diagnostic tests and appointments

DAP standards and practices are set by Ontario Health - Cancer Care Ontario. It is important to remember that not everyone referred to the DAP will be diagnosed with cancer. The DAP is meant to confirm or rule out if cancer is there.

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What is a Patient Navigator?

When you are referred to the CDAP, you will have access to a Patient Navigator. A Patient Navigator is a nurse who will be your primary contact to help prepare and support you while you undergo diagnostic tests and appointments.

What does a Patient Navigator do?

- Assists with timely access to your tests,
- Organizes your appointments with specialists and helps you prepare,
- Provides you with information and support services, and
- Answers your questions and provides you with reliable education material.



How to contact your Patient Navigator:

Your Patient Navigator can be reached by phone at 613-544-3400 extension 2653 or Toll Free at 1-855-544-3400 extension 2653.

If your Patient Navigator is not available when you call, leave a voice message with your name, number and reason for call. Your Patient Navigator will return your call as soon as possible.

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What are the Common Tests?

Your tests will depend on the symptoms and problems you are having. They will also depend on the results of other tests you may have already had. **You may not need to have all of the tests listed.** Your specialist will order tests specific to your health problem. Read the following sections in this resource for more information about common tests and how to prepare for your specialist appointments.

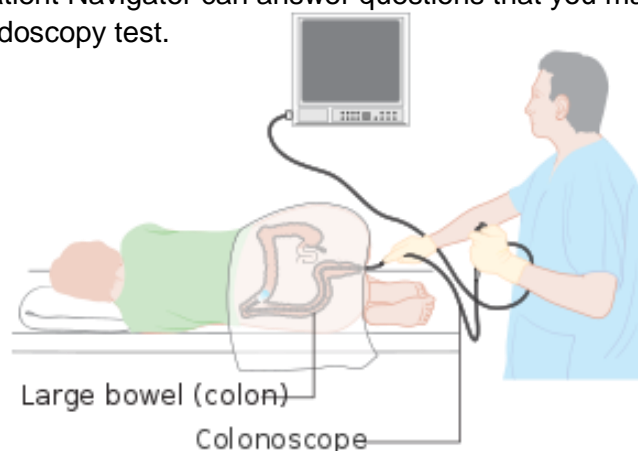
Here are some common tests that may be arranged by the CDAP:

Endoscopy

An endoscopy is a test that allows a specialist to look inside your body. The specialist does this using a thin hollow tube called a scope. The scope has a bright light and camera on it to look at the lining of different parts of the body.

There are several different types of endoscopy. To investigate colorectal cancer, the most common endoscopy test is called a **colonoscopy** or a **flexible sigmoidoscopy**. These tests allow a specialist to look at the lining of your colon or rectum and take biopsies. You may have had one of these tests already. A colonoscopy or flexible sigmoidoscopy is used to detect many different changes or abnormalities in the colon and rectum, including cancer.

Each endoscopy test will come with specific instructions for what you need to do before and after the test. Your Patient Navigator can answer questions that you may have about preparation for any endoscopy test.



Picture1. Colonoscopy (Picture used with permission from Microsoft)

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Biopsy

A biopsy is a test that takes samples of tissue so it can be looked at closely under a microscope. The biopsy sample is examined under a microscope by a trained doctor called a pathologist. You may hear your biopsy results referred to as 'pathology'. A biopsy confirms or helps to rule out the presence of cancer in your body.

To confirm or rule out colorectal cancer, the biopsy will usually be done during the endoscopy procedure (see section above).

The results of your biopsy will be shared with you by one of the physicians on your care team. Your Patient Navigator can tell you more about your biopsy procedure and when to expect the results back.

Laboratory Tests (blood work)

Blood tests are needed to give your specialist an overall view of your health. Common blood tests include electrolytes, complete blood counts, and kidney function.

If a doctor suspects colorectal cancer, they will also order a blood test called a Carcinoembryonic Antigen (CEA) level. A CEA level may be increased in certain types of cancer, including colorectal cancer.

Computed Axial Tomography (CT or CAT) Scan

A CT scan is a special x-ray test that combines many images using a computer. This gives the specialists a more detailed view of the area of your body being scanned.

Sometimes a contrast medium (dye) is used to improve the picture. This may be given orally (by mouth), intravenously (IV) in your vein, or both. **Please tell us if you are allergic to contrast dye, have diabetes or may be pregnant.**

A CT scan usually takes about 20 minutes to complete, however your appointment will be over one hour if you require an oral contrast picture, to allow the contrast to travel through your body.

You will be called by a clerk with details about your CT test, including the date, time and instructions before the test.

To prepare for a CT scan, you need to:

- Follow any fasting/fluid instructions that you are given (note: patients with diabetes will be given specific instructions)

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- Arrive 30 minutes before your scan
- Bring a list of all the medications you are taking, including over the counter or herbal medications

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)

If a doctor suspects rectal cancer, they will order an MRI to look closely at the area where the tumour is growing.

An MRI machine uses magnets, radio waves and a computer to take pictures of areas inside your body. Your specialist uses the information from an MRI to help with your diagnosis.

During the MRI, you are placed into a 'tube' of the scanner. It's important to stay very still during the scan so that good images can be taken. There is no pain with the test, but people who have a fear of small spaces (claustrophobia) may need to take something (a sedative) to help them relax. If you take a sedative, someone will need to drive you home.

People with metal in their body may not be able have an MRI because of how the metal interacts with the electromagnets. A MRI may also affect pacemakers – if you have a pacemaker, you should let your Patient Navigator know.

An MRI can last about 40 minutes.

Transrectal ultrasound (TRUS)

A transrectal ultrasound (TRUS) is a test that is like a flexible sigmoidoscopy, but there is a special ultrasound probe on the end of the camera. This allows more detailed information to be obtained about your rectal cancer. A TRUS may be ordered instead of, or in addition, to an MRI (see section above).

Positron Emission Tomography (PET) Scan

PET scans are not routinely used to diagnose colorectal cancers, so it is unlikely that this test will be ordered for you. However, you may have heard about PET scans being used to diagnose other cancers.

A PET scan is a test that uses a tracer, called FDG, which is injected into one of your veins. The PET scan machine will look at where the tracer goes in your body and how the tracer is used. The scan will show any areas that have abnormal (usually high) activity.

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Talk to your Patient Navigator or a member of your healthcare team if you have more questions about the use of PET scans to diagnose colorectal cancer.

Waiting for Appointments, Tests and Results

Waiting for appointments and test results can be hard. It is normal to feel worried or upset. Keep in mind that your Doctor and Patient Navigator are there to help you, so be sure to speak with them about any questions or concerns.

Here are some things you can do to help make waiting a bit easier:

- Ask for details – at the time of your test, ask when and how you will be told about the results. This will give you a better idea of how long you will have to wait. Write down any other questions you might have and bring them to the appointment.
- Write down information such as your health history and list of medications for the health care team and bring it to your appointment.
- Talk to your Patient Navigator – Your Patient Navigator is there to answer questions that you or your family may have during your diagnostic process. Do not hesitate to call.
- Get support – talk to your trusted loved one(s) or healthcare provider(s) (like your Family Doctor) about how you are feeling.
- You are encouraged to bring someone with you to your appointments to listen and support you.

What Resources and Support Services are Available to Me?

Your time in the diagnostic phase may be an emotional, stressful or scary time for you and your loved ones. We encourage you to talk to your loved ones, and your health care team, including your Patient Navigator, about how you are feeling.

Your Patient Navigator will work with you to identify resources that may be useful, such as education material or community services.

Additional supports available to you include social workers, registered dietitians, and spiritual care providers. If you would like to see one of these team members, your Patient Navigator can arrange a referral.

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What Should I Expect at My Specialist Appointment?

A specialist is a doctor who focuses on a specific area of care. You may be asked to see one or more specialists to help diagnose your problem. At your first visit with your specialist you will review your medical history and any recent changes to your health. You and your specialist will work together to create a plan of care that is specific to you.

To confirm, rule out or treat colorectal cancer, the first specialist you will often see is a surgeon who specializes in operations to the colon or rectum.

Things to Bring to your Specialist Appointment:

- Your health card
- A list of all the medications including over the counter drugs you are taking
- A list of herbs, vitamins or supplements that you are taking
- A list of allergies
- A list of recent changes to your health or wellbeing
- A list of questions or concerns that you have for your specialist
- Glasses, if you need them to read or fill out forms
- A book, magazine or tablet to help pass the time
- A friend or family member for support or to take notes.

Suggested Questions to Ask at Your First Visit:

- What do you know so far about my health problem?
- What are the next steps in my care?
- How do I prepare for any upcoming tests?
- How can I improve my health and wellbeing?

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