A Patient Pathway is a way to learn about your journey. The goal is to learn what to expect as a part of the team that will guide and accompany you through the health care system. It is an overview of the five main steps to the evaluation and potential diagnosis of colorectal cancer. They are: **1 Screening**, **2 Suspicion**, **3 Diagnostic Tests**, **4 Diagnosis**, and **5 Staging**. Every patient’s journey is different and may or may not follow every step of the pathway.
Screening

Screening applies to patients with no symptoms. The goal of screening is to find growths before they become cancerous or cancers before symptoms appear. To learn more about symptoms related to colorectal cancer please refer to the Suspicion section 2.

Average risk

Patient profile
- No parent, sibling or child who has had colorectal cancer
- Age 50-74

Next step
- FIT Test. This test detects hidden blood in a stool sample
  - No blood: Repeat yearly
  - Some blood: Colonoscopy, maybe other tests
- Colonoscopy: Some patients move directly to this test

Increased risk

Patient profile
- One or more parent, sibling or child with colorectal cancer and
- Age 50+ or within 10 years of age of the relative who had colorectal cancer

Next step
- Colonoscopy (refer to section 3)
  - No growths: Repeat every 5 years (this may vary based on conversation with your provider)
  - Growth: Depending on type of growths more tests may be done
  - Depending on risk profile you may be referred for genetics counseling

For patients with NO symptoms, go to the Diagnostic Test section 3.

Q. How do I get screened?

A. Contact your healthcare provider. They will help determine your risk of colorectal cancer and recommend the next best step.
## Suspicion

Suspicion refers to symptoms that could be related to colorectal cancer.

### Low/no suspicion

It is unlikely your symptoms are caused by colorectal cancer.

**Next steps**

- Your provider will suggest a treatment plan
- Your provider will suggest a follow-up plan

### Increased suspicion

It is possible your symptoms are caused by colorectal cancer.

**Next steps**

- Your provider will refer you to the appropriate specialist for diagnostic tests

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**Q. What do my symptoms mean?**

**A.** Contact your healthcare provider. You will have an office visit and possibly blood work or other tests.

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For patients with symptoms, go to the Diagnostic Test section 3.
Colonoscopy
A camera at the end of a flexible tube that can look at the lining of the colon and rectum as well as sample or remove suspicious growths.

CT or Virtual Colonoscopy
An X-ray scan that can create a picture of the colon and rectum.

No cancer
You may or may not need additional tests, treatments or follow up. Consult your specialist.

Cancer
Your specialist will help you decide on the next steps. Go to the Diagnosis section 4.

Q. When do I need these kinds of tests?
A. If screening suggests you need further testing (refer to the Screening section 1) or
If you have symptoms of colorectal cancer (refer to the Suspicion section 2) or
If your provider suspects you may have colorectal cancer (refer to the Suspicion section 2)

Q. What kinds of tests are done?
Diagnosis

Once diagnosed with colorectal cancer, your healthcare provider or specialist will refer you to all of the necessary team members to help care for you.

- **Surgeon**: Specializes in surgically removing the cancer at the appropriate time
- **Medical Oncologist**: Specializes in providing chemotherapy and other medications
- **Radiation Oncologist**: Specializes in providing radiation therapy
- **Cancer Counselor**: Specializes in counseling patients and families about their diagnosis and helping along the journey

**Q.** What treatments are available for my diagnosis?

**A.** There are many treatments including surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation. You may need some or all of these treatments. The specialist in each area will help you determine what treatments are best for you.

**Q.** Who are other members of the team?

**A.** You may be referred to a surgeon, medical oncologist, radiation oncologist, or cancer counselor, among others. All of your team members work together to provide you the absolute best care.

**Q.** What is the next step?

**A.** In order to determine the next best step, you will need Staging. Please refer to the Staging section section 5.
Staging

Staging will help your team decide what types of treatments are best suited for you. Staging helps describe how much the cancer has grown and if it has spread to other parts of the body.

Tests that help with staging may include some or all the following:

- **CT Scan**
  An X-ray scan that creates 3-D images of the inside your body

- **Ultrasound**
  A test that uses sound waves to create close-up images of certain structures in your body

- **MRI**
  A scan that uses magnets and radio waves to create images of the inside of your body

- **PET**
  A test that creates images and looks at the function of certain structures in your body

Once all of the necessary testing is completed, your healthcare provider or specialist will pull everything together and refer you to all of the necessary team members who will work together to provide you with the absolute best care.
TIMELINE
This is a general timeline for the journey through different steps. Please remember that not all patients will need to go through all of the steps so each patient’s timeline may differ.

1. Screening
2. Suspicion

These are the first triggers to look for colorectal cancer. If screening or suspicion suggest you may have colorectal cancer, diagnostic tests should happen within 14 days.

14 DAYS
3. Diagnostic test
4. Diagnostic

Once testing (colonoscopy) and a diagnosis is made, staging and treatment should happen within 28 days.

28 DAYS
5. Staging
6. Treatment

Staging helps your team make your treatment plan. Treatment (Surgery, Chemotherapy, Radiation) should begin within 28 days after diagnosis.
TIPS FOR YOUR APPOINTMENTS

- Check with your provider’s office to see how long your appointment is going to be
- Bring a family member or close friend to help take notes and for support
- It’s a great idea to have a list of questions or concerns
- Keep a list of recent changes to your state of health
- Bring a list of medications you are taking

RESOURCES

American Cancer Society
nccn.org/patients/guideliness/colon

National Comprehensive Cancer Network
cancer.org/cancer/colonandrectumcancer

Kaiser Permanente Northwest Cancer Care
kpnw cancercare.org