

Colorectal cancer: treatment without colostomy

“Colorectal cancers are the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States,” informs Kathryn L. Kepes, MD, a board-certified radiation oncologist at the Center for Radiation Oncology, “and the American Cancer Society reports that nearly 150,000 people were diagnosed with colon or rectal cancer in 2006.”

The good news is that colon and rectal cancers grow slowly, so if the disease is caught in its earliest stages doctors have a wider range of effective treatment options in fighting these cancers.

Screenings for colorectal cancer include the digital rectal exam and a fecal occult blood test. Most primary care physicians perform these tests. Every three years a *sigmoidoscopy*, which examines the lower colon using a soft, flexible tube, can be used to augment the screening protocol. A more comprehensive test, the colonoscopy, provides visualization along the entire

length of the colon and should be scheduled every 5 to 10 years after the age of 50.

Don't delay screening

“I can't stress enough how important screening colonoscopy is in protecting against colorectal cancers,” emphasizes Andrew W. O'Leary, DO, also a board-certified radiation oncologist at the

Center for Radiation Oncology. “Colonoscopy has clearly been validated to prevent colon cancer by removing precancerous polyps, and it allows early detection of cancer so appropriate primary and adjuvant therapies can be implemented.”

If patients delay screening tests until they have symptoms like rectal bleeding, frequent gas pains, or a change in bowel habits or the appearance of the stool, a tumor may already have metastasized and may require surgery and future reliance on a

Fast facts about colorectal cancer

- In the United States, 106,680 new cases of colon cancer and 41,930 cases of rectal cancer were diagnosed in 2006.
- Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in both men and women.
- **Risk factors:**
 - Age (more than 90% of cases occur in patients age 50 years and older)
 - Personal or family history of colon cancer, polyps, or inflammatory bowel disease
 - Smoking
 - Alcohol consumption
 - Obesity
 - Inactivity
 - High-fat, low-fiber diet

colostomy bag to remove waste.

What's new?

Dr. Kepes explains that chemotherapy and radiation therapy have long been used postoperatively to eradicate any remaining cancer cells following surgery and to improve patients' survival rates.

Research now indicates that these modalities, when used in the *neoadjuvant* or preoperative setting, offer even greater benefits.

“One trial found that survival rates of patients receiving chemotherapy and radiation therapy before surgery were comparable to those of patients receiving postoperative therapy,” reports Dr. O'Leary, “and patients tolerated neoadjuvant treatment better.

“Patients who received treatment preoperatively also experienced noticeable shrinkage of their tumors before surgery was performed, which made it possible to perform less extensive surgery, sparing the sphincter and avoiding a colostomy. Additionally, neoadjuvant therapy resulted in a lower local recurrence rate.”

Drs. O'Leary and Kepes are available to see colorectal cancer patients in consultation. Contact Dr. Kepes, Dr. O'Leary, or Maria Appel, RN, BSN, OCN, director of nursing, at (813) 661-6339 for more information. The Center for Radiation Oncology is a provider with all major insurance companies. **FHCN**



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For your health ...

Drs. Kepes and O'Leary welcome calls regarding this article or other related topics. For further information, call **(813) 662-6024**. See one of their four locations:

B R A N D O N
717 W. Robertson St.
(813) 661-6339

S U N C I T Y C E N T E R
720 Cortaro Dr.
(813) 633-5513

T A M P A
2715 W. Virginia Ave.
(813) 870-0162

Z E P H Y R H I L L S
7315 Green Slope Dr.
(813) 783-8614

The center also has full treatment facilities at Moffitt Cancer Center at Tampa General Hospital, and the Plant City Cancer Treatment Center at South Florida Baptist Hospital.

Drs. Kepes and O'Leary are available to speak to groups and organizations on a wide variety of cancer-related topics. They have developed workshops on prostate, breast, gynecological, lung, and skin cancers. To schedule a speaking engagement, please call **(813) 662-6024, ext 1**.