# Colorectal Cancer

Colorectal cancer is cancer that starts in the colon or rectum. The colon and the rectum are parts of the large intestine, which is the lower part of the body’s digestive system. During digestion, food moves through the stomach and small intestine into the colon. The colon absorbs water and nutrients from the food and stores waste matter (stool). Stool moves from the colon into the rectum before it leaves the body.

Most colorectal cancers are adenocarcinomas (cancers that begin in cells that make and release mucus and other fluids). Colorectal cancer often begins as a growth called a polyp, which may form on the inner wall of the colon or rectum. Some polyps become cancer over time. Finding and removing polyps can prevent colorectal cancer.

Colorectal cancer is the third most common type of cancer in men and women in the United States. Deaths from colorectal cancer have decreased with the use of colonoscopies and fecal occult blood tests, which check for blood in the stool.

# Liver and Bile Duct Cancer

The liver has many important functions in the body. For example, it cleans toxins from the blood, makes bile that helps digest fat, makes substances that help blood clot, and makes, stores, and releases sugar for energy.

Primary liver cancer is cancer that starts in the liver. The most common type of primary liver cancer is hepatocellular carcinoma, which occurs in the tissue of the liver. When cancer starts in other parts of the body and spreads to the liver, it is called liver metastasis.

Liver cancer is rare in children and teenagers, but there are two types of liver cancer that can form in children. Hepatoblastoma occurs in younger children, and hepatocellular carcinoma occurs in older children and teenagers.

The bile ducts are tubes that carry bile between the liver and gallbladder and the intestine. Bile duct cancer is also called cholangiocarcinoma. When it begins in the bile ducts inside the liver, it is called intrahepatic cholangiocarcinoma. When it begins in the bile ducts outside the liver, it is called extrahepatic cholangiocarcinoma. Extrahepatic cholangiocarcinoma is much more common than intrahepatic cholangiocarcinoma.

# Pancreatic Cancer

The pancreas lies behind the stomach and in front of the spine. There are two kinds of cells in the pancreas. Exocrine pancreas cells make enzymes that are released into the small intestine to help the body digest food. Neuroendocrine pancreas cells (such as islet cells) make several hormones, including insulin and glucagon, that help control sugar levels in the blood.

Most pancreatic cancers form in exocrine cells. These tumors do not secrete hormones and do not cause signs or symptoms. This makes it hard to diagnose this type of pancreatic cancer early. For most patients with exocrine pancreatic cancer, current treatments do not cure the cancer.

Some types of malignant pancreatic neuroendocrine tumors, such as islet cell tumors, have a better prognosis than pancreatic exocrine cancers.

# Skin Cancer

The skin protects against heat, sunlight, injury, and infection. Skin also helps control body temperature and stores water and fat. Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer. It usually forms in skin that has been exposed to sunlight, but can occur anywhere on the body.

Skin has several layers. Skin cancer begins in the epidermis (outer layer), which is made up of squamous cells, basal cells, and melanocytes.

There are several different types of skin cancer. Squamous cell and basal cell skin cancers are sometimes called nonmelanoma skin cancers. Nonmelanoma skin cancer usually responds to treatment and rarely spreads to other parts of the body. Melanoma is more aggressive than most other types of skin cancer. If it isn’t diagnosed early, it is likely to invade nearby tissues and spread to other parts of the body. The number of cases of melanoma is increasing each year. Only 2 percent of all skin cancers are melanoma, but it causes most deaths from skin cancer.

Rare types of skin cancer include Merkel cell carcinoma, skin lymphoma, and Kaposi sarcoma.

# Thyroid Cancer

The thyroid is a gland at the base of the throat near the windpipe. It is shaped like a butterfly, with a right lobe and a left lobe. A thin piece of tissue connects the two lobes. The thyroid makes hormones that help control heart rate, blood pressure, body temperature, and weight.

There are four types of thyroid cancer. These are papillary, follicular, medullary, and anaplastic thyroid cancer. Papillary is the most common type of thyroid cancer.

Anaplastic thyroid cancer is hard to cure with current treatment. Other types of thyroid cancer can usually be cured.

Being exposed to [radiation](http://www.cancer.gov/Common/PopUps/popDefinition.aspx?id=45072&version=Patient&language=English) to the head and neck as a child increases the risk of thyroid cancer. Having certain [genetic](http://www.cancer.gov/Common/PopUps/popDefinition.aspx?id=46391&version=Patient&language=English) [conditions](http://www.cancer.gov/Common/PopUps/popDefinition.aspx?id=651193&version=Patient&language=English) such as [familial medullary thyroid cancer](http://www.cancer.gov/Common/PopUps/popDefinition.aspx?id=563950&version=Patient&language=English), [multiple endocrine neoplasia type 2A syndrome](http://www.cancer.gov/Common/PopUps/popDefinition.aspx?id=702095&version=Patient&language=English), and [multiple endocrine neoplasia type 2B syndrome](http://www.cancer.gov/Common/PopUps/popDefinition.aspx?id=702100&version=Patient&language=English) can also increase the risk of thyroid cancer.