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Fact Or Fiction – The Truth About Colorectal Cancer

By News Canada

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by: **News Canada**

Colorectal Cancer is a disease that only affects older men.

FICTION: It can affect anyone, men or women equally. Men and women 50 years or older are at greater risk for the disease.

Colorectal Cancer is usually curable.

FACT: It is usually curable when detected early. More than 90 percent of patients with localized cancer confirmed to the colon or rectum are alive five years after initial diagnosis.

Getting tested is necessary for individuals who have symptoms.

FACT: Men and women age 50 or older should get screened regularly for colorectal cancer. Unfortunately, symptoms for this disease are often silent and therefore it is important to get screened regularly even if you have no symptoms. About 75 percent of all new cases of colorectal cancer occur in individuals with no known risk factors for the disease.

I cannot do anything about being diagnosed with colorectal cancer.

FICTION: Colorectal cancer is highly preventable. Some preventative measures include eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables and low in fat, regular exercise, moderate alcohol consumption, and no smoking. In addition, it is extremely important to get screened for colorectal cancer after the age of 50. Screening can help to identify colorectal cancer in its early stages or before it even begins.

There really are no treatment options for colorectal cancer.

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FICTION: Treatment will depend on the type, grade and stage of the cancer. Management of the disease may include surgery and radiation in the earlier stages of the disease, and chemotherapy options such as Camptosar®, Xeloda® or 5-fluorouracil (5-FU) are generally used in the later stages of the disease when the cancer has spread to other areas of the body.

No two individuals respond the same to therapy, but there is evidence to demonstrate that one or all of these treatment options can effectively aid people living with colorectal cancer.

I can have a good quality of life if diagnosed with colorectal cancer.

FACT: Many people diagnosed with colorectal cancer can have a good quality of life. There are effective treatment options, support groups, and supportive care to help cancer patients cope with the side effects of treatment, as well as the emotional and everyday concerns of living with this disease.

For more information on colorectal cancer, contact the Canadian Cancer Society toll free at

1-888-939-3333 or visit the web site at www.cancer.ca. Other excellent resources include the Colorectal Cancer Association of Canada web site at www.ccac-acc.ca or The National Colorectal Cancer Campaign at

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Staging Colon Cancer

By Kyle Greatbatch

When a doctor wants to evaluate the progress of colon cancer of one of his patients he or she uses a

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method called Staging. This method is about finding out to what extent the tumor (colon cancer) has spread to the other regions of the patients body. Once the doctors figured out in what stage the colon cancer is, they will develop the best course of action or treatment.

At this point in time the system that is most commonly used for the staging process of colon cancer is called the American Joint Committee on Cancer's (AJCC) TNM staging system. Simply put this system used for staging places the patients into one of four stages.

Stage 0

Stage 0 also known as carcinoma in situ or colorectal cancer. In this stage the colon cancer has been detected in the innermost lining of the colon.

Stage I

In this stage the colon cancer has already begun to spread. But the cancer is still in the inner lining of the rectum or colon. In this stage the colon cancer has not reached the outer walls of the colon yet. Stage I is also known as Duke A or colorectal cancer.

Stage II

In this stage the colon cancer spread more deeply into or through the colon or rectum. Possibly the colon cancer may have affected other tissue as well. In this stage the colon cancer hasn't reached the Lymph nodes (bean-sized structures which can be found in the entire body that helps the body fight all kinds of infections and diseases. Stage II is also known as Duke B or colorectal cancer.

Stage III

When you are in this stage the colon cancer has now spread to the Lymph nodes although it hasn't spread to nearby parts of the body. Stage III is also known as Duke C or colorectal cancer.

Stage IV

In this stage the colon cancer has spread through the Lymph node system to other nearby tissue. This is most commonly called metastasis. The organs that most likely are affected are the lungs and liver. Stage IV is also known as Duke D or colorectal cancer.

Recurrent Colon Cancer or Cancerous Cells

When doctors talk about recurrent colon cancer they mean that cancerous cells that have already been treated have returned. These cancerous cells could possibly have returned as colorectal cancer but they might as well return in any other part of the body too.

By Kyle Greatbatch

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