

What you should know about Colon Cancer

Some Quick Facts

What is Colon Cancer?

The colon and rectum make up parts of your digestive system, known as the gastrointestinal system. First, your stomach and small intestine process food, absorbing energy. Your colon and rectum then absorb fluids from the food to form solid waste that passes out of your body through the rectum. **Colon cancer** is a form of cancer that originates in your colon area. It usually develops slowly over time as abnormal tissue, eventually changing into a **malignant tumor**.

What causes Colon Cancer?

According to recent studies, age and health history affect the development of colon cancer.

- Age: Generally, people age 50 and older have a higher risk for developing colon cancer.
- Family History: The risk of developing colon cancer is greater if you have a family history of colon, ovary, endometrium or breast cancer, or with a history of polyps in your colon.
 - Chances of developing colon cancer are also greater if you have a history of ulcerative colitis or Crohns Disease.
 - Hereditary conditions, including familial adenomatous polyposis and hereditary nonpolyposis colon cancer can also lead to colon cancer.

What types of Colon Cancer are there?

- Adenocarcinomas: This is the most common form of colon cancer. It starts in cells in the glands that produce mucus to lubricate the colon.
- Carcinoid tumors: These tumors start from specific hormone-producing cells in the intestine.
- Lymphomas: These are cancerous immune system cells that can show up in the colon but also in lymph nodes and other organs.
- Sarcomas: These tumors can start in muscles, blood vessels and connective tissue surrounding the colon.

How is Colon Cancer treated?

- Surgery: Surgery is the most common form of treatment for colon cancer. The surgeon removes the cancerous tumor either through cutting away the tumor, radiofrequency, burning away the tumor or freezing it away.
- Chemotherapy: Cancer treatment using drugs that you swallow or have injected into your body to kill cancer cells and prevent them from dividing.
- Radiation therapy: High energy radiation that kills cancer cells and inhibits them from populating.
- Targeted therapy: Cancer treatment using drugs or other substances to kill cancer cells without affecting normal cells.
- Clinical Trial: Clinical trials are part of the cancer research process. Researchers use clinical trials to determine the effectiveness of new cancer treatments.

Treatment Success

How colon cancer is treated depends on several factors:

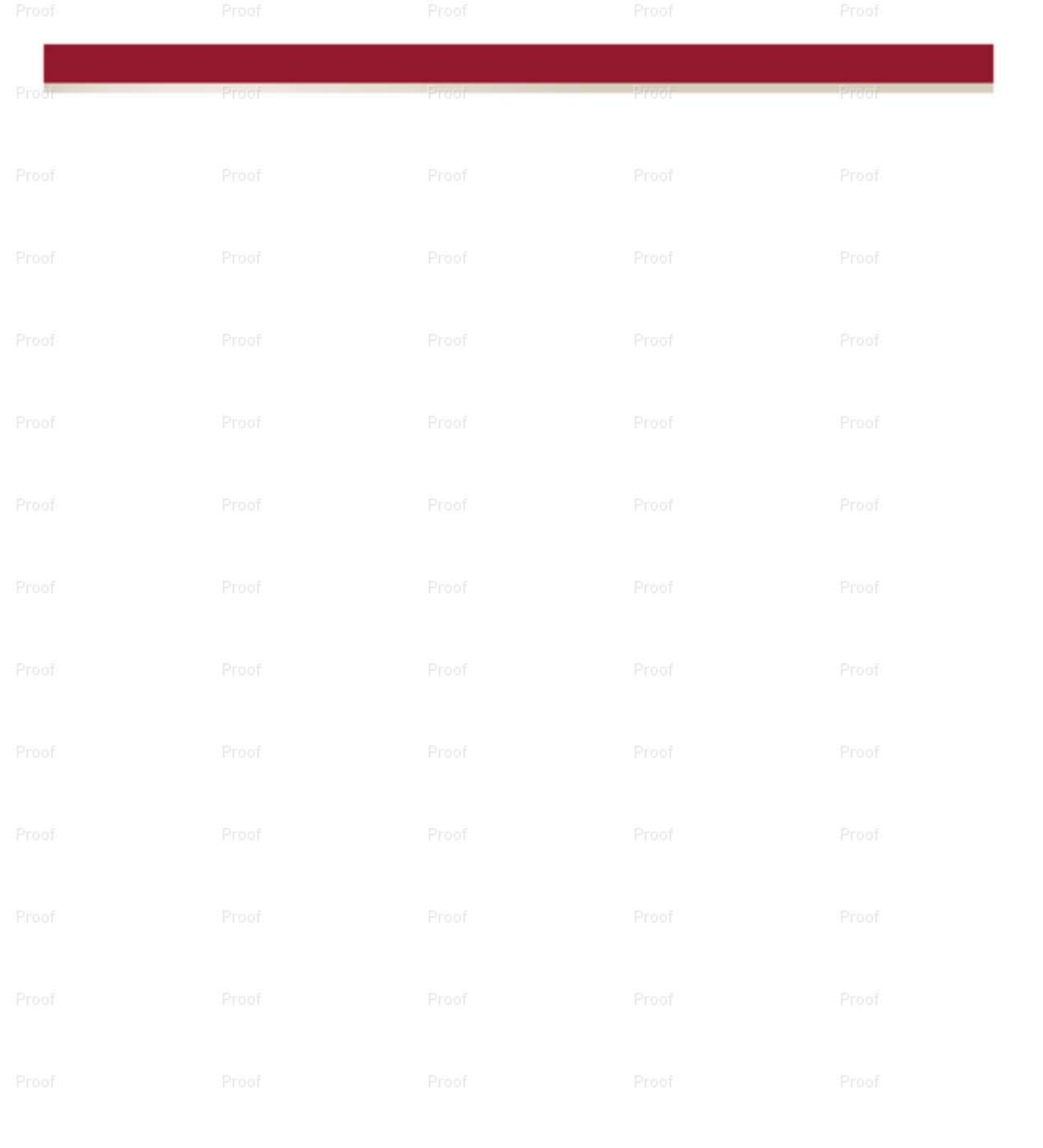
- The stage of the cancer. The stage depends on whether the cancer is only in the inner lining of the colon, or spread to the whole colon, or spread also to other places in the body.
- If the cancer has affected the colon, for example if it has created a hole in the colon.
- If after surgery, there are any remaining cancer cells.
- If there are carcinoemryonic antigens present in your blood before treatment begins.
- If the cancer has recurred.
- Your overall health status.

Colon Cancer Clinic

The gastrointestinal cancer team at University of Minnesota Physicians Cancer Care consists of several experts who are dedicated to diagnosing and treating a wide range of colon cancer cases.

To schedule a consultation or appointment, call 612-624-9708





Visit umphysicians.org/cancercare for more information.

