Colon Cancer Treatment Overview

The purpose of this overview is to give you an idea of the usual treatment for colon cancer. Not all people are the same, so treatments can be different. If you have questions about your treatment, ask your surgeon, cancer patient navigator, cancer doctor or nurse. The page numbers noted refer to where you can find more information in the “Support, Knowledge, Hope” booklet in your “Blue Ribbon Colorectal Cancer Information Kit”.

Now that you know that you have colon cancer
- Your doctor may now book you for more tests, including a CT scan, an MRI, bloodwork, and a colonoscopy, if you have not already had one (see pages 18-24).
- If your doctor is not a surgeon, you will be referred to a colon cancer surgeon.
- Your doctor should refer you to the cancer patient navigator; you should expect to hear from the navigator within a week. The navigator will review the “Blue Ribbon” kit with you, answer your questions and ask about the supports you need. You can call your navigator, dial 1-888-524-1234.

Staging
- Your test results tell your doctor the “stage” of your cancer. Sometimes, the stage will not be known until after you have surgery (see page 44).
- Staging helps your doctor recommend the best treatment plan for you.
- Ask your doctor the stage of your cancer.

Recommended treatment by stage
- If you have Stage I (one) colon cancer, your only treatment will be surgery (see pages 45-46).
- If you have Stage II (two) or Stage III (three) colon cancer, treatment will usually be chemotherapy, radiation and surgery. Most patients have chemotherapy and radiation before surgery; some have it after surgery. Your doctor will refer you to a cancer doctor to discuss the treatments that are best for you (see pages 46-47).
- If you have Stage IV (four) colon cancer, your treatment plan will be based on your unique needs. Your doctor may refer you to a cancer doctor (see page 48).
- At this time, your cancer patient navigator can help you understand your treatment options, cope with your concerns and make arrangements to go to the cancer centre (see pages 50-99).

Follow up Care
- When your treatment is finished, the cancer doctors and nurses will give you information about your long term follow up care (also called “Survivorship Care”) (see pages 84-93).
- Your family doctor and surgeon will work together to provide this care.
- If you are worried about whether colon cancer runs in your family, ask your doctor about a referral to Medical Genetics. See the handout “Could the Colon or Rectal Cancer in My Family be Hereditary?” for more information.