

# **Colorectal Cancer**

**Cancer of  
the Large  
Bowel &  
Rectum  
(Back  
Passage)**

**Look After Your  
Insides**

**Your  
Questions  
Answered**

## Colorectal Cancer

Colorectal cancer is the second most common cancer in the United Kingdom, affecting 31,000 people annually... and causing 19,000 deaths. That's a staggering figure when you consider the disease is potentially curable if diagnosed in the early stages.

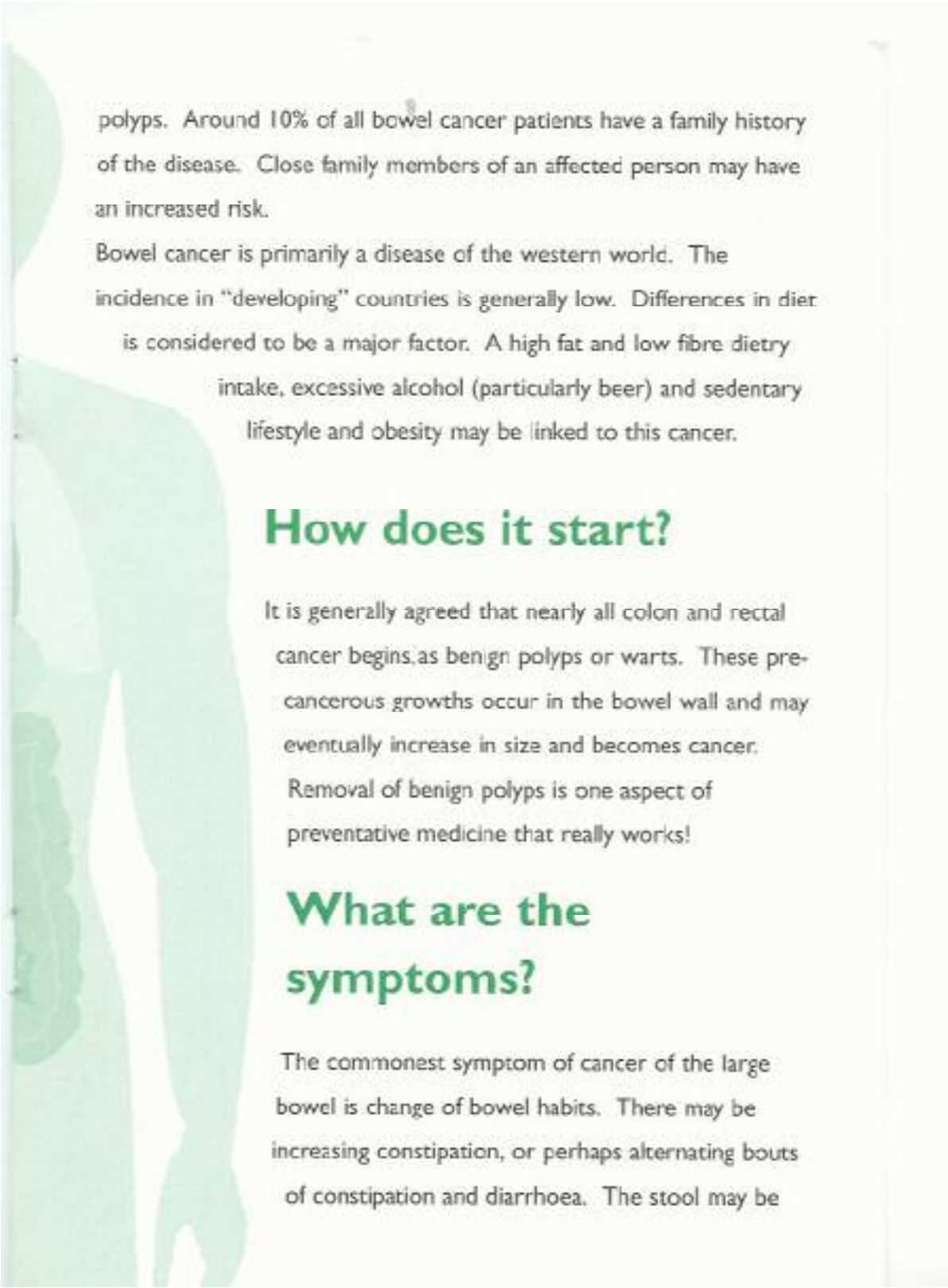
## What is Bowel Cancer?

Bowel cancer is the development of a malignant tumour or growth of the bowel or back passage from the cells that line this organ.

## Who is at risk?

Though colorectal cancer may occur at any age, more than 90% of the patients are over age 40, at which point the risk doubles every ten years. In addition to age, other high risk factors include people who have an inflammatory bowel disease or those who have a tendency to develop





polyps. Around 10% of all bowel cancer patients have a family history of the disease. Close family members of an affected person may have an increased risk.

Bowel cancer is primarily a disease of the western world. The incidence in “developing” countries is generally low. Differences in diet is considered to be a major factor. A high fat and low fibre dietary intake, excessive alcohol (particularly beer) and sedentary lifestyle and obesity may be linked to this cancer.

## How does it start?

It is generally agreed that nearly all colon and rectal cancer begins as benign polyps or warts. These pre-cancerous growths occur in the bowel wall and may eventually increase in size and become cancer.

Removal of benign polyps is one aspect of preventative medicine that really works!

## What are the symptoms?

The commonest symptom of cancer of the large bowel is change of bowel habits. There may be increasing constipation, or perhaps alternating bouts of constipation and diarrhoea. The stool may be

streaked with blood or mucus. A feeling that you haven't completely emptied your bowels is quite common if the tumour is in the rectum. This can be uncomfortable and you may constantly feel the urge to go to the toilet. You may feel a colicky type pain, or vague discomfort in your abdomen.

These symptoms can occur in other diseases and therefore, it is important to see your doctor if these symptoms are experienced and persist for more than two weeks and receive a thorough examination.

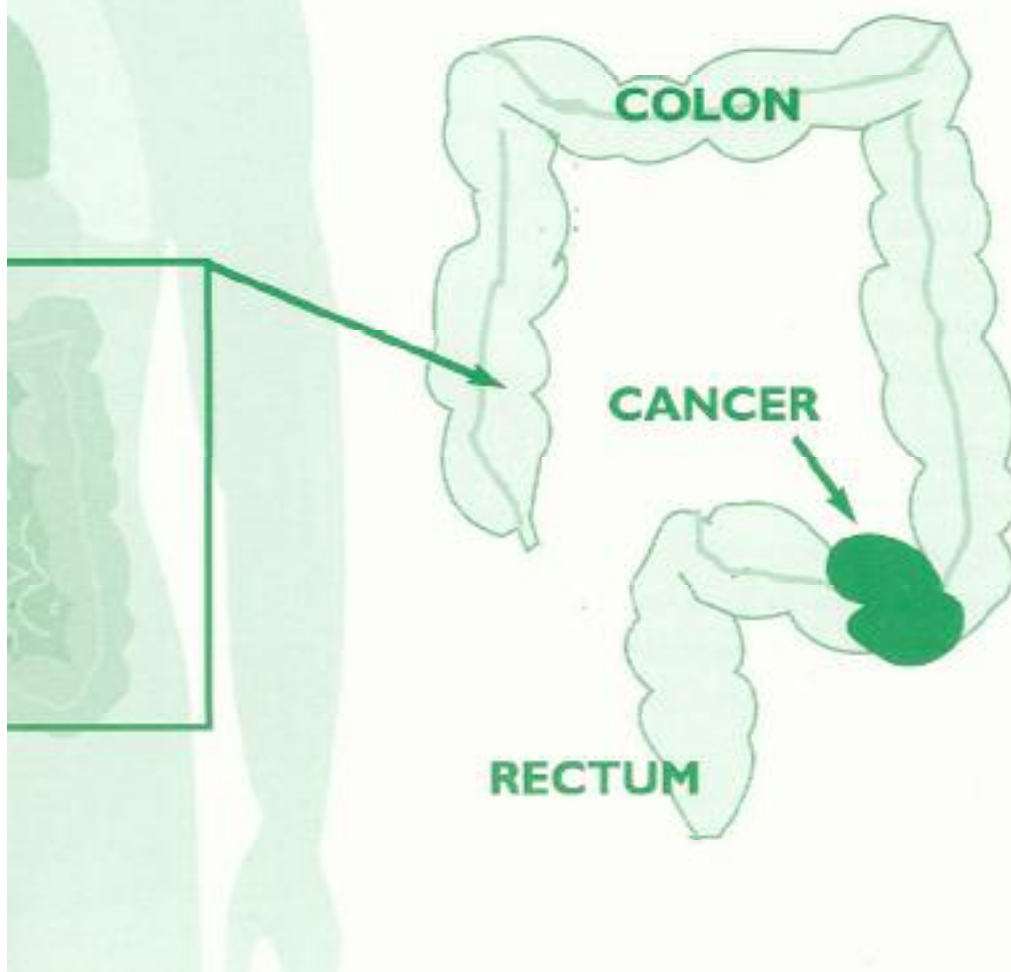
The Doctor will need to examine your back passage, he/she will do this with their finger. this should not be painful, many people find it more embarrassing than uncomfortable.

You may be asked to have further tests and your doctor will refer you to a colorectal specialist surgeon.



## How is Colorectal Cancer Treated

Colorectal cancer requires surgery in nearly all cases for complete cure. Radiation and chemotherapy are sometimes used in addition to surgery. Between 80-90% of people are restored to normal health if the cancer is detected and treated in the earliest stages.



Due to modern technology fewer patients require a colostomy, the surgical construction of an opening onto the abdomen from the bowel.

## Can Colon Cancer be prevented?

There are steps that reduce the risk of contracting the disease. One way is having benign polyps removed by an outpatient procedure called colonoscopy. In addition to removing the polyps, the long flexible tubular instrument used in the procedure provides a more thorough bowel examination.

Though not definitely proven, there is some evidence that the food we eat may play a significant role in preventing colorectal cancer as far as we know, eating high fibre, low fat food is the only measure that might help prevent colorectal cancer.

Finally, you must be aware of changes in your bowel habits and see your doctor without delay if symptoms persist.

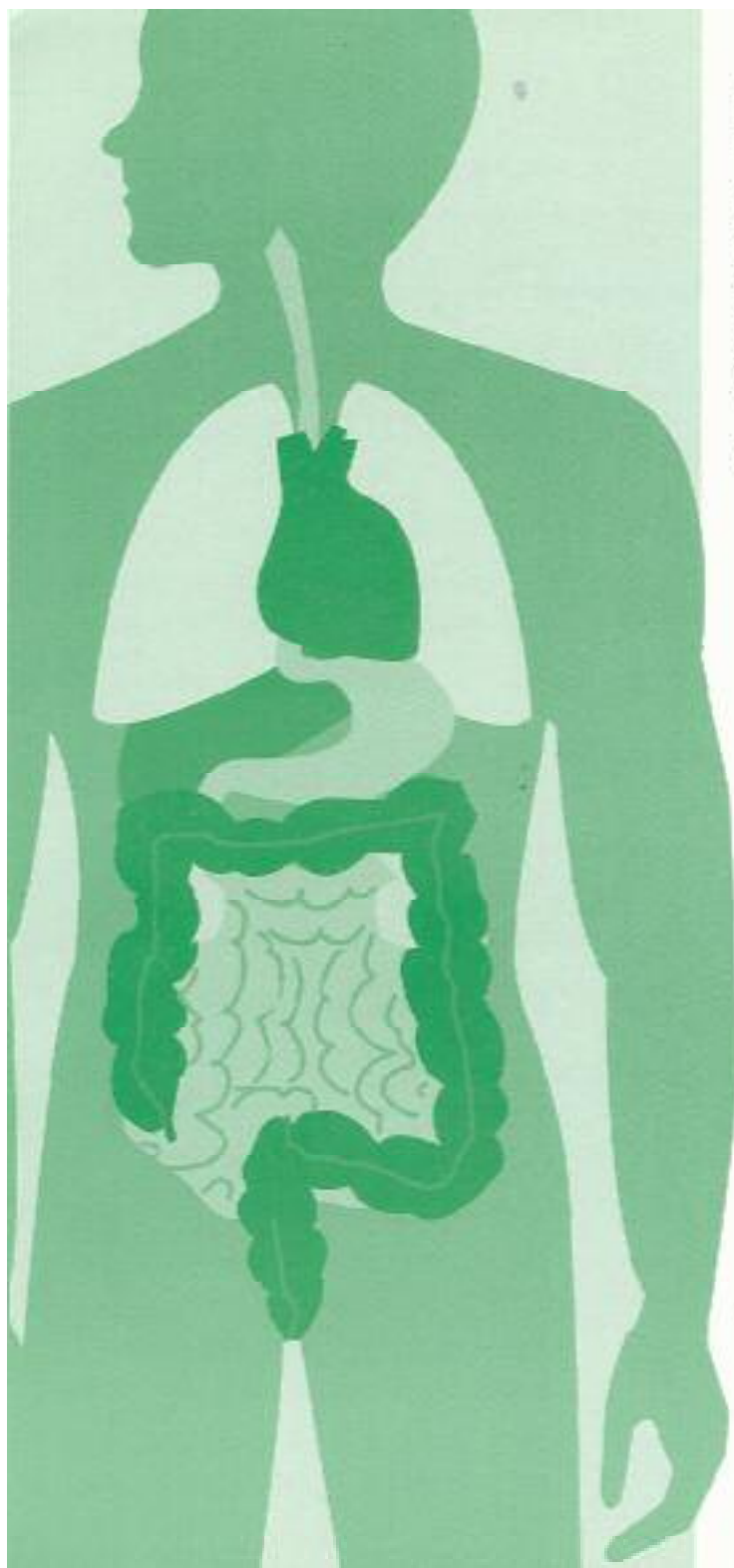




## Remember

If you experience any of the symptoms listed below, it does not necessarily mean that you have colorectal cancer or any other serious health problem. However, you should not delay in seeking your doctor's advice.

- Blood in the stool.
- Diarrhoea or constipation that continues after two weeks.
- Stools that are smaller in width than usual.
- Chronic fatigue.
- Stomach discomfort (bloating, fullness, cramping, frequent gas pains).
- Unexplainable weight loss.



If you require any further information contact

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