WHAT IS COLORECTAL CANCER?

INTRODUCTION

Some Helpful Facts....

1. The Colon and Rectum are collectively known as the Colorectum and colorectal cancer is a cancer that starts in the cells that line either the colon or the rectum.
2. Colorectal cancer usually starts from a polyp, a growth that originates from the lining of the colon or rectum.
3. Polyps are benign entities and can take 3-5 years to develop and an additional 2-3 years to turn cancerous.

To understand colon and rectal cancer, collectively known as colorectal cancer, it’s best to delve into the part of the body that is impacted and how it functions.

The colon is a 6-foot long muscular tube connecting the small intestine to the rectum. The colon, which along with the rectum is also known as the large intestine, is a highly specialized organ that is responsible for processing digestive waste so that emptying the bowels is easy and convenient. The colon removes water from the stool (digestive waste matter) and stores the solid stool. Once or twice a day it empties its contents into the rectum to begin the process of elimination. The rectum is a 6-8-inch storage chamber that connects the colon to the anus. It is the rectum's job to receive stool from the colon, to let you know there is stool to be evacuated, and to hold the stool until you are ready to evacuate that stool.

During digestion, food (in a soupy form) moves through the stomach and small intestine into the colon. The colon absorbs water and nutrients from the food and stores stool. Stool moves from the colon into the rectum before it leaves the body.

Colorectal cancer is a cancer that can originate either in the colon or in the rectum. These cancers can also be named colon cancer or rectal cancer respectively, depending on where they start. Colon cancer and rectal cancer are often grouped together because they have many features in common. Most colorectal cancers are adenocarcinomas (cancers that begin in cells that line the inner colon or rectum). Cancer starts when cells in the body begin to grow out of control. Cells in nearly any part of the body can become cancerous and can spread to other areas of the body.
Before colorectal cancer develops, it typically starts as a growth or polyp, which may form on the inner wall of the colon or rectum. Polyps may become cancerous over time, typically 3-5 years. Finding and removing polyps can prevent colorectal cancer. While some types of polyps can change into cancer over the course of several years, not all polyps become cancerous. Whether a polyp will become cancerous over time depends on the kind of polyp a person develops. Would you like to learn more about colorectal cancer? Such as:

- **Basic Anatomy of the GI System**
- **Genetics & Colorectal Cancer**
- **Staging of Colorectal Cancer**
- **Diagnosis of Colorectal Cancer**

If so, please click on any of the links provided above. Together, anything is possible!