

How the Colon and Rectum Function

In order to understand colon and rectal cancer, collectively known as colorectal cancer, it might first help to understand what parts of the body are affected and how they work. The colon is a 6-foot long muscular tube connecting the small intestine to the rectum. The colon, which along with the rectum is called the large intestine, is a highly specialized organ that is responsible for processing waste so that emptying the bowels is easy and convenient. The colon removes water from the stool (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 an 8-inch chamber that connects the colon to the anus. It is the rectum's job to receive stool from the colon, to let you know that there is stool to be evacuated, and to hold the stool until evacuation happens.

During digestion, food 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.

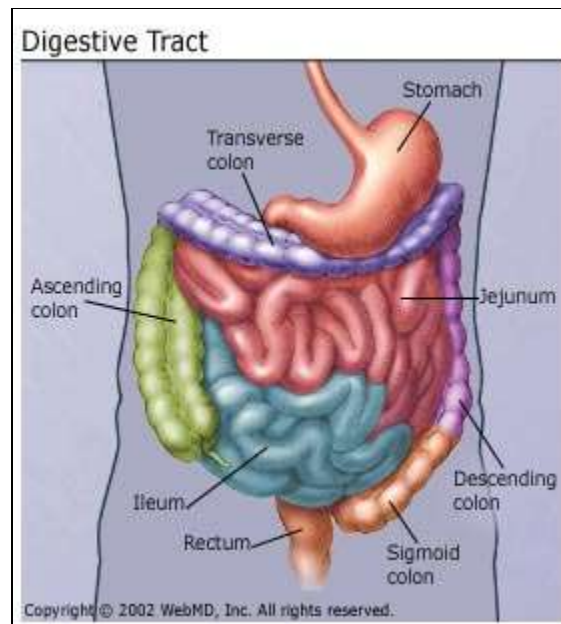


Image Source: <https://www.webmd.com/colorectal-cancer/guide/what-is-colorectal-cancer>