

Ngā kōwhiringa whakamaimoa
i te mate pukupuku whēkau

Bowel cancer treatment options

A guide for communities in Aotearoa.



At a glance...

- Bowel cancer is a term that includes both colon and rectal cancer; however, colon and rectal cancers are treated differently.
- Treatment for early-stage bowel cancer and metastatic bowel cancer is also different.
- The two types of treatments offered to both colon and rectal cancer patients are surgery and chemotherapy.

“My grandfather and father had bowel cancer, so I did the (screening) test that came in the mail. The result came back positive for cancer, and I had surgery. Luckily we found it early.”

SILA,
STAGE ONE BOWEL CANCER SURVIVOR

Treatment for early-stage colon cancer

- **Surgery:** The main treatment for early and locally advanced bowel cancer is surgery to remove part or all of the bowel (a colectomy). The aim is to remove as much of the cancer as possible and any lymph nodes close by.
- During surgery, it's sometimes necessary to create a hole in your abdomen called a stoma. Body waste (faeces) can then exit through the stoma into a collection pouch worn outside the body. This may be permanent or temporary (reversible), depending on your circumstances.
- **Chemotherapy:** If the cancer has spread to the lymph nodes, you may also need chemotherapy after surgery. These are drugs designed to either kill cancer cells or stop them from growing.

- Chemotherapy treatments can have side effects – however, there are usually different options available. Your oncologist will let you know whether chemotherapy may benefit you and the potential side effects of each option.

Treatment for early-stage rectal cancer

- Surgery is the primary treatment for early-stage rectal cancer.
- However, if the cancer has spread beyond the rectal wall and/or into nearby lymph nodes (locally advanced cancer), you may need radiation therapy – or chemotherapy combined with radiation therapy – usually before surgery.
- After the surgery, you may also need to have chemotherapy – your oncologist will talk you through your options.



Want to know more?

You can find more detailed information on our website: bowelcancernz.org.nz
> About bowel cancer > Treatment options
> Treatment options for bowel cancer



Helpful tip

Being informed about your recommended treatment options will help you decide on the best treatment pathway for you.



NEED SUPPORT?

Contact our bowel cancer support nurse:
Email: here4you@bowelcancernz.org.nz
Phone: 0800 BCNZ NURSE (226 968)

Join our private Facebook group:
bowelcancernz.org.nz > Support > Finding Support

CONTACT US

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