Colorectal Nursing Department

Discharge advice:
Glossary of terms
Information for patients
This leaflet has been written to give explanations of the words used during your treatment.

If you would like any further help or explanation, please speak to your Advanced Nurse Practitioner or Specialist Nurse Practitioner.

Tel: 01865 221 839 or 01865 235 367
(9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday)
**Abdomen**: The part of the body that contains the pancreas, appendix, bladder, stomach, intestines (including ileum and colon), liver, spleen, and gallbladder.

**Benign**: Not cancerous; does not invade nearby tissue or spread to other parts of the body.

**Biopsy**: A procedure used to remove cells or tissues, so that we can look at them under a microscope to check for signs of disease. When a sample of tissue or fluid is removed with a needle, the procedure is called a needle biopsy or fine-needle aspiration.

**Cancer**: A term for diseases in which abnormal cells divide without control. Cancer cells can invade nearby tissues and can spread through the bloodstream and lymphatic system to other parts of the body.

**Catheter**: A flexible plastic tube used to deliver fluids into or withdraw fluids from the body.

**Chemotherapy**: Literally means ‘drug treatment’ but more commonly refers to treatment with anti-cancer drugs.

**Clinical trial**: A research study which tests how well new medical treatments or other interventions work on people. Each study is designed to test new methods of screening, prevention, diagnosis, or treatment of a disease.

**Colon**: Large bowel or large intestine, situated in the abdomen.

**Colonoscopy**: An examination of the inside of the colon using a thin tube with a light at the end, called a colonoscope. This is inserted into the rectum. If abnormal areas are seen, images can be taken. We can also remove tissue, which can then be examined under a microscope to determine if disease is present.

**Colorectal**: Referring to the colon or the rectum.
**Colostomy**: An opening into the colon from the outside of the body, where the colon is brought to the skin surface. A colostomy provides a new path for waste material to leave the body. Also see ileostomy.

**Digital rectal examination**: An examination in which a doctor inserts a lubricated, gloved finger (digit) into the rectum to feel for abnormalities.

**External radiation**: Radiation therapy which uses a machine to aim high-energy rays at a cancer. Also called ‘external-beam radiation’.

**Familial polyposis**: An inherited condition in which numerous polyps (tissue masses) develop on the inside walls of the colon and rectum. This increases the risk of colon cancer.

**Faecal occult blood test or FOBT**: A test to check for blood in the stool. (Faecal refers to stool. Occult means hidden.)

**Gastroenterologist**: A doctor who specialises in diagnosing and treating disorders of the digestive system.

**Ileostomy**: An opening into the small bowel or ileum from the outside of the body, where the small bowel is brought to the skin surface. This can provide a new path for waste material to leave the body after the colon has been removed, or allows the colon to tolerate intensive treatment more easily. Also see colostomy.

**Internal radiation**: Radiation therapy that is given internally. This is done by placing radioactive material that is sealed in needles, ‘seeds’, wires, or catheters directly into or near the tumour. Also called implant radiation or brachytherapy.

**IV**: Intravenous; injected into a blood vessel.

**Local therapy**: Treatment that affects cells in the tumour and the area close to it.
Lymph node: A rounded mass of lymphatic tissue that is surrounded by a capsule of connective tissue. Also known as a lymph gland. Lymph nodes are spread out along lymphatic vessels and contain many lymphocytes, which filter the lymphatic fluid (lymph).

Lymphatic system: The tissues and organs that produce, store, and carry the white blood cells that fight infection and other diseases. This system includes the bone marrow, spleen, thymus, lymph nodes and a network of thin tubes which carry lymph and white blood cells. These tubes branch, like blood vessels, into all the tissues of the body.

Malignant: Cancerous; a growth with a tendency to invade and destroy nearby tissue and spread to other parts of the body.

Metastasis: The spread of cancer from one part of the body to another. Tumours formed from cells that have spread are called ‘secondary tumours’ and contain cells that are like those in the original (primary) tumour. The plural is metastases.

Oncologist: A specialist doctor who is trained in diagnosing and treating cancer, using chemotherapy, hormone therapy, biological therapy and radiation treatments.

Polyp: A growth that protrudes from the lining of the digestive tract.

Radiation therapy: The use of high-energy radiation from X-rays, neutrons, and other sources, to kill cancer cells and shrink tumours. Radiation may be delivered by a machine into the body (external-beam radiation therapy) or from material called radioisotopes.

Radioisotopes produce radiation and are placed in or near a tumour or near cancer cells. This type of radiation treatment is called internal radiation therapy, implant radiation, or brachytherapy.

Systemic radiation therapy uses a radioactive substance, such
as a radio labelled monoclonal antibody, which circulates throughout the body.

**Rectum**: Lower part of the large bowel, which ends in the anus.

**Recurrent cancer**: Cancer that has returned at the same site as the original (primary) tumour or in another location, after it had disappeared.

**Side effects**: Problems that occur when treatment affects healthy cells. Common side effects of cancer treatment are fatigue, nausea, vomiting, decreased blood cell counts, hair loss, and mouth sores.

**Sigmoidoscopy**: Inspection of the lower colon using a thin, tube with a light at the end, called a sigmoidoscope. This is inserted into the rectum. Samples of tissue or cells may be collected for examination under a microscope. The procedure is also called a proctosigmoidoscopy.

**Stage**: The ‘stage’ of a cancer describes its size and whether it has spread beyond its original site to other areas in the body.

**Staging**: Staging may involve further scans and tests, which help your doctors to decide on the most appropriate treatment for you. It also looks at whether the disease has spread from the original site to other parts of the body.

**Stoma**: A surgically created opening from an area inside the body to the outside. Colostomy, ileostomy and urostomy are types of stomas. It is also sometimes called an ostomy.

**Stomatherapist**: A nurse trained in the care and support of people with ileostomies, colostomies or any other type of stoma. They often also have excellent knowledge of wound management.

**Systemic therapy**: Treatment that uses substances which travel through the bloodstream, reaching and affecting cells all over the body.
**Tumour:** An abnormal mass of tissue that results from excessive cell division. Tumours perform no useful body function. They may be either benign (not cancerous) or malignant (cancerous).

**Ulcerative colitis:** A disease that causes long-term inflammation of the lining of the colon; it increases the risk for colon cancer.

**X-ray:** High-energy radiation used in lower doses to diagnose diseases and also to create images to allow the doctors to be able to see your internal organs and bones.
If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**