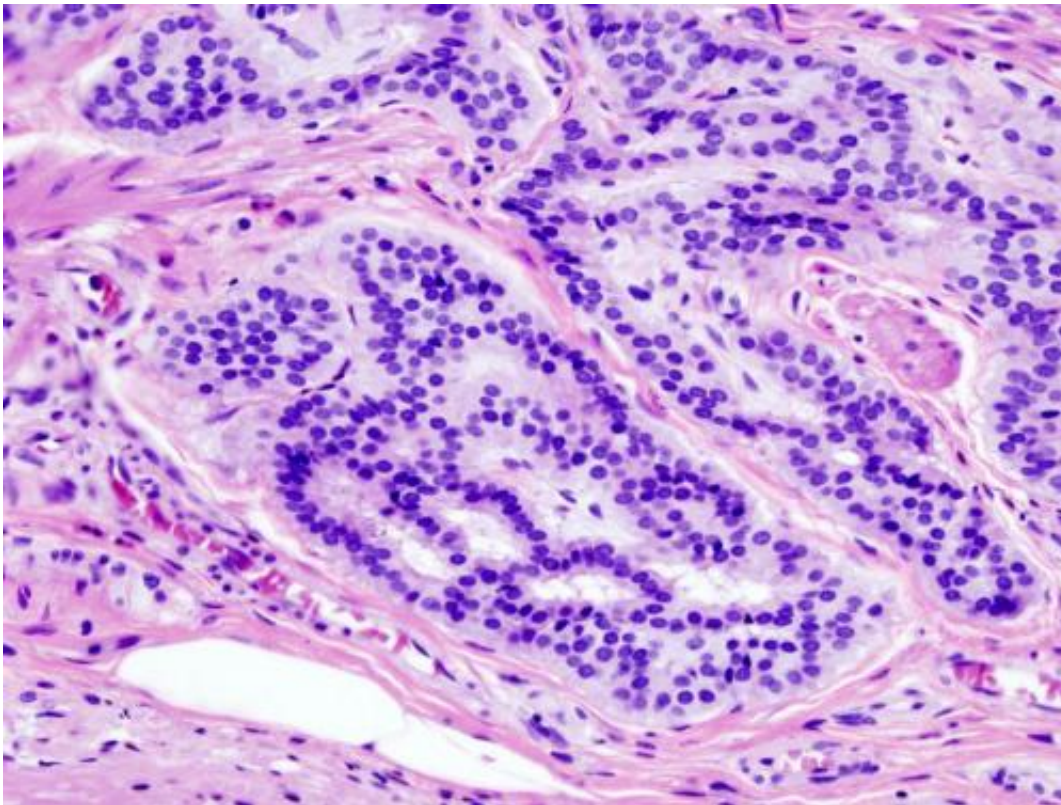


# Breaking down colorectal cancer

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Cancer—Histopathologic image of colonic carcinoid. Credit: Wikipedia/CC BY-SA 3.0

Cancer of the rectum and colon often are referred to together as colorectal cancer, but treatments can be different.

And, unfortunately, a recent British study found that treatment for

[colorectal cancer](#) has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, as people remained home and [medical services](#) were limited.

Dr. David Etzioni, a Mayo Clinic colorectal surgeon, reminds people that [early diagnosis](#) and treatment are crucial to ensure better outcomes, and that it all begins with scheduling a screening.

Dr. Etzioni says the [colon](#) and the rectum are in effect the same.

"The colon and rectum are what we call the large intestine. It's about 5 feet long and is the last part of the GI (gastrointestinal) tract, just before the GI stream exits the body.

"The rectum is the last 12 to 14 centimeters of the large intestine. And while they are somewhat geographically distinct, they are in effect one that runs into the other."

Colon and rectal cancers are similar in many ways, but their treatment can be different, depending on stage and location.

"Usually when we find a [colon cancer](#) or rectal cancer, the operation involves removing a portion of the colon or rectum."

Dr. Etzioni says it's much more effective to treat an earlier-stage cancer than a later one, and that's why screening is so important. "Colorectal cancer screening is one of the most effective types of screening for a cancer because not only can we detect an early-stage cancer, but we can actually prevent a cancer from developing."

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