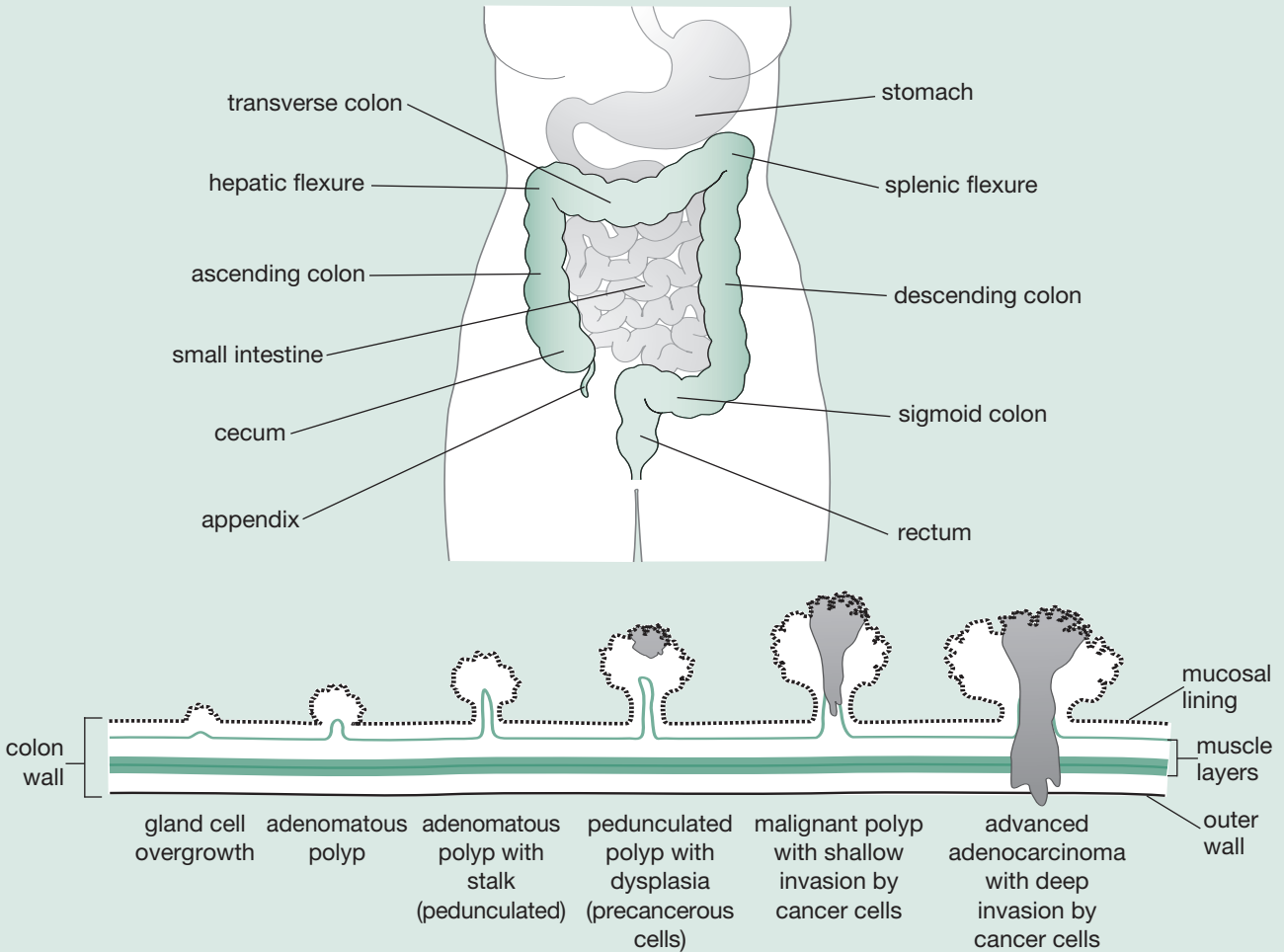


## The Colon and Rectum: From Healthy to Cancer



Shaped like an upside-down letter “U”, the large intestine is made up of six sections:

- The cecum, a small pouch about 2–3 inches long located where the small intestine joins the colon
- The ascending colon, or right colon, which rises from the cecum along the right side of the abdomen and makes a left turn at the hepatic flexure
- The transverse colon, which crosses the abdomen toward your left, and turns downward at the splenic flexure
- The descending colon, or left colon, which goes

- down the left side of your abdomen
- The short sigmoid colon, which looks like the letter “S”
- The rectum, where feces are stored before being expelled; and the anus, the opening at the end of the rectum.

**How polyps become cancerous.** The drawing of the colon wall shows how cell growth can progress from benign hyperproliferation (overgrowth) through the various stages of polyps to malignant cancer that penetrates the wall of the intestine. ■