

Colorectal Cancer: What You Need To Know

Colorectal Cancer

Cancer is a disease in which cells in the body grow out of control. When cancer starts in the large intestine (colon) or rectum, it is called colorectal cancer.

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in the United States. Treatment works best when colorectal cancer is found early.

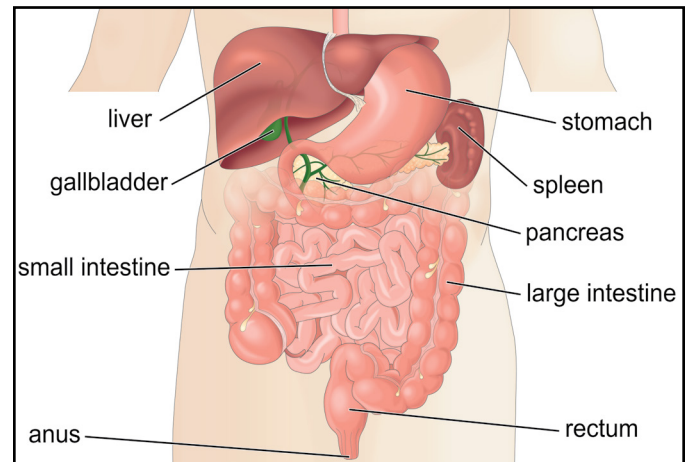
Your Risks

Your risk of getting colorectal cancer increases as you get older. Your risk goes up if you have:

- an inflammatory bowel disease such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis
- a personal or family history of cancer or polyps in the colon or rectum
- a genetic syndrome.

Other things that can increase your risk for colorectal cancer are:

- lack of regular exercise
- not eating enough fruits and vegetables
- eating foods high in fat and low in fiber
- weighing too much
- using tobacco products
- drinking alcohol.



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Your colon is a long, hollow tube at the end of your digestive tract, where your body makes and stores stool. Polyps are extra tissue growth inside your body. They can grow in the large intestine (colon).

Symptoms

Call your health care provider if you have any of these symptoms:

- change in bowel habits
- rectal bleeding
- blood in your stool
- stools that are narrower than usual
- consistent pain during bowel movements
- constipation or diarrhea lasting more than 1 month
- general stomach discomfort (bloating, fullness, cramps, gas pains)
- a feeling that your bowel does not empty completely
- losing weight for no reason.

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The above symptoms can be signs of other problems such as ulcers, an inflamed colon or hemorrhoids.

Regular Screening

Screening looks for polyps or signs of cancer (such as blood in your stool) that you can't see. Regular screening can help:

- prevent cancer by finding colon polyps or other signs of cancer
- find cancer at an early stage when it can be easier to treat.

Screening starts at age 45. Together, you and your health care provider will decide which screen is right for you. The best screen is the one you do.

Allina Health recommends 3 screenings:

- **colonoscopy:** This procedure is done once every 10 years at a clinic or hospital. The provider uses a tiny camera with a light to look in your colon for polyps or cancer.
- **FIT (iFOBT):** This stool test is done once every year at home. It checks for unusual blood in your stool sample. You mail the sample to the lab for testing.

- **sDNA-FIT (Cologuard®):** This stool test is done once every 3 years at home. It checks for unusual blood as well as DNA from cancer or polyps in your whole stool sample. You mail the sample to the lab for testing.

Talk with your health provider if you think you are at an increased risk for colorectal cancer. Ask when to start getting screened, which screen is right for you and how often to get screened.

Prevention

You can help prevent colorectal cancer.

- Get regular screening tests.
- Learn if your parents or siblings had polyps.
- Eat foods low in fat and high in fiber. Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- Do not use tobacco.
- Limit alcohol.
- Get regular exercise.
- Maintain a healthy weight.

Talk with your health care provider if you have any questions or concerns.