



## Colorectal Cancer

March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, a time to learn about colorectal cancer and the importance of regular screening.

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the U.S. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), if everyone age 50 years or older had regular colon screenings, deaths from this disease could be reduced by almost 60% <sup>(1)</sup>.

Common symptoms of colorectal cancer can include <sup>(1,2)</sup>:

- Blood in or on stool
- Narrower than usual stools
- Change in bowel habits
- Frequent gas, stomach pains, or indigestion
- Unexplained weight loss
- Chronic fatigue

According to the American Cancer Society, there are several factors that may increase your risk of developing colorectal cancer <sup>1,3)</sup>:

- Age- 50 years of age and older
- Diet high in red meat (e.g., steak and hamburger) and processed meats (e.g., hot dogs and lunch meat)

- Certain racial and ethnic groups (African American and Ashkenazi Jews)
- Inflammatory bowel disease
- Personal or family history of polyps or colorectal cancer
- Type 2 diabetes
- Smoking
- Heavy alcohol use
- Lack of exercise
- Overweight

Colorectal cancer usually develops from precancerous polyps in the colon or rectum and may not show any symptoms. Colorectal cancer screening is one of the most effective ways to prevent this type of cancer because screening can often detect polyps early, when treatment works best <sup>(1,3)</sup>.

You should begin regular colorectal cancer screening at age 50. There are several [screening tests](#) available; including: fecal occult blood test (FOBT); flexible sigmoidoscopy; and colonoscopy <sup>(1)</sup>.

For more information on colorectal cancer, risks, screening, and treatment, please visit the following web-links:

### **Colorectal Cancer Information:**

- [All About Colorectal Cancer](#)
- [Colon Cancer Interactive Tutorial](#)

### **References:**

1. [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)
2. [U.S. National Library of Medicine and National Institutes of Health](#)
3. [American Cancer Society](#)

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