

What Can You Do To Prevent Colorectal Cancer?

Learn the risk factors, learn the symptoms, know your family medical history and understand your colorectal screening options.

Risks Factors

You are at increased risk if you:

- Have a personal or family history of colorectal polyps, colorectal cancer or inflammatory bowel disease
- Use tobacco
- Drink alcohol in excess
- Are overweight
- Eat a high-fat diet with little or no fruits or vegetables
- Never exercise
- Are embarrassed or afraid to talk with your health care professional about colorectal cancer

If you believe you are at higher risk, talk with your health care professional about when to begin colorectal testing.

Symptoms

Colorectal cancer and colorectal polyps often develop with few or no symptoms. However, sometimes there are warning signs that you should learn to recognize:

1. Rectal bleeding
2. Blood in or on the stool
3. Change in bowel habits
4. Stools that are narrower than usual

5. General stomach discomfort (bloating, fullness and/or cramps)
6. Diarrhea, constipation, alternating diarrhea and constipation, or feeling that the bowel does not empty completely
7. Frequent gas pains
8. Weight loss for no apparent reason
9. Constant tiredness
10. Vomiting

If you have any of these symptoms, see your health care professional immediately!

Family History

While anyone can get colorectal cancer, we know that some families are at higher risk for the disease. If a first-degree relative — parent, brother, sister or child — has had colorectal cancer or colorectal polyps that means you have a “family history” of the disease. You are more likely to develop the disease yourself.

Family history of colorectal cancer is grouped into two types. When colorectal cancer runs in a family, but no specific abnormality in the genes has been linked to the cancers, the family is said to have *familial colorectal cancer*.

When a family has a gene abnormality (also called genetic mutation) that causes colorectal cancer this is called *hereditary colorectal cancer* and it is passed from one generation to the next. Genetic testing is available for these colon cancer syndromes.

If you are unsure of your family’s medical history, you need to talk to your relatives. Ask them if they have ever had a colorectal polyp, colorectal cancer or inflammatory bowel disease. Then talk with your health care professional about colorectal screening tests.

Colorectal Screening Tests

Starting at age 50, men and women at average risk for colorectal cancer should begin routine screening tests. If you have a personal or family history of colorectal cancer, colorectal polyps or inflammatory bowel disease, talk with your health care professional — you may need to be tested earlier or more frequently.

There are several screening tests available. Talk with your health care professional about which test is right for you.

Beginning at age 50:

- Have a fecal occult blood test (FOBT) yearly.
- Have a sigmoidoscopy every five years, or a colonoscopy or double contrast barium enema every five to 10 years.
- Have a digital rectal exam every five to 10 years at the time of each screening sigmoidoscopy, colonoscopy or barium enema.

To learn more about the Colossal Colon Tour or colorectal cancer, visit

www.CHECKYOURINSIDESOUT.ORG



The *Colossal Colon Tour* is brought to you by the



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What African-Americans Need to Know About

Colorectal Cancer

**Check
Your
Insides Out!**
FOR COLORECTAL CANCER

Colorectal cancer is cancer of the colon or rectum and is the second leading cause of cancer death in the United States for men and women combined. But 90 percent of all colorectal cancer cases and deaths are preventable and the disease is easily treated — and often cured — when detected early. That is why screening for prevention and early detection is so important.

All men and women are at risk for colorectal cancer. Some people are at higher risk for the disease because of age, lifestyle or personal and family medical history.

African-Americans appear to suffer more from the disease than other populations. It is especially important for African-American men and women to understand colorectal cancer prevention and talk with their health care professional about colorectal screening tests. Routine screening tests can help prevent colorectal cancer and can detect the disease in its early stages when it is more easily treated.

Here are some important facts to remember:

- The rate of people diagnosed with colorectal cancer is higher among African-Americans than among any other population group in the United States.
- Death rates from colorectal cancer are higher among African-Americans than any other population group in the United States.

- Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer among African-Americans.
- There is evidence that African-Americans are less likely to undergo screening tests for colorectal cancer.
- African-Americans are less likely than Caucasians to have colorectal polyps detected when they can easily be removed. Polyps are grape-like growths on the lining of the colon or rectum that may become cancer, but can be removed to prevent the disease from ever occurring.
- African-Americans are more likely to be diagnosed with colorectal cancer in advanced stages when there are fewer treatment options available, and they are less likely to live five or more years after being diagnosed with colorectal cancer than other populations.
- Diet, tobacco use and a lack of access to equal medical treatment options may increase the risk of African-Americans developing colorectal cancer.
- There may also be genetic factors that contribute to the higher incidence of colorectal cancer among some African-Americans.