



Colorectal Cancer 2009 Fact Sheet

Introduction

Colorectal cancer is cancer of the colon or rectum. It is equally common in men and women. An estimated 146,970 people will be diagnosed in 2009, and an estimated 49,920 people will die from the disease. With recommended screening, this cancer can be prevented (by removing polyps before they become cancerous) or detected early, when it can be more easily and successfully treated.

At Risk

- Men and women age 50 and older
- People who use tobacco, are obese or are sedentary
- People with a personal or family history of colorectal cancer or benign (not cancerous) colorectal polyps
- People with a personal or family history of inflammatory bowel disease, such as long standing ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease
- People with a family history of inherited colorectal cancer

Risk Reduction

- Be physically active and exercise regularly.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Eat a high-fiber diet rich in fruits, vegetables, nuts, beans and whole grains.
- Consume calcium-rich foods like low-fat or skim milk.
- Limit red meat consumption and avoid processed meats.
- Don't smoke.
- Don't drink alcohol excessively.

Early Detection

If you are at average risk for colorectal cancer, start having regular screening at age 50. If you are at greater risk, you may need to begin regular screening at an earlier age. The best time to get screened is before any symptoms appear. Use this guide to help you discuss screening options with your health care professional. Consider one of the following:

Tests that find pre-cancer and cancer:

Colonoscopy
Virtual colonoscopy
Flexible sigmoidoscopy
Double-contrast barium enema

Screening intervals:

Every 10 years
Every 5 years
Every 5 years
Every 5 years

Tests that mainly find cancer:

Fecal occult blood test (FOBT)
Fecal immunochemical test (FIT)
Stool DNA test (sDNA)

Every year
Every year
Ask your health care professional

Any abnormal result of a virtual colonoscopy or double-contrast barium enema, as well as a positive FOBT, FIT or sDNA test, should be followed up with a colonoscopy.

Symptoms

Early stages of colorectal cancer do not usually have symptoms. Advanced disease may cause:

- Rectal bleeding or blood in or on the stool
- Change in bowel habits or stools that are narrower than usual
- Stomach discomfort (bloating, fullness or cramps)
- Diarrhea, constipation or feeling that the bowel does not empty completely



- Weight loss for no apparent reason
- Constant fatigue
- Vomiting

Treatment

- Surgery is the most common treatment. When the cancer has spread, chemotherapy or radiation therapy is given before or after surgery.