



## **COLORECTAL HEALTH**

PROMOTING CANCER AWARENESS & EARLY DETECTION

### **Taking Control of Your Health**

**Cancer is the most curable in its early stages.**

**At the Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute, we know that routine screenings save lives every day. Advocate for your health and talk with a health care professional to make an informed decision on which screenings are right for you.**

#### **What is colorectal cancer?**

- Colorectal cancer is a term that includes cancers of the colon and cancers of the rectum.
- Colorectal cancer is the growth of cancer cells in the colon or rectum.
- Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer in both men and women.
- Colorectal cancer often begins as a non-cancerous polyp or growth. These polyps can often be found and removed before they turn into cancer.
- People at increased risk include men and women who:
  - Are age 45 and older.
  - Have a family history of colorectal cancer or other genetic factors (e.g. Lynch syndrome, or familial polyposis).
  - Have a personal history of colorectal polyps.
  - Have Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD), also known as Crohn's disease or Colitis.
  - Are obese and/or are physically inactive.
  - Are regular tobacco or alcohol users.
  - Have a diet that is high fat, high in red and processed meat and low in fiber, calcium, fruit and vegetables.
  - Have Type 2 diabetes.
- More than 140,000 people will get colorectal cancer in the United States each year and over 50,000 will die.

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**Routine screening tests have lowered death rates for colorectal cancer in recent years.**

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#### **Who can get colorectal cancer?**

- Any man or woman can get colorectal cancer, although there are certain factors that increase your risk.

## What are the symptoms of colorectal cancer?

- The most common symptom is a change in bowel habits, such as diarrhea, constipation or blood in the stool.
- Other symptoms include cramping or pain in the lower abdominal (stomach) area, constant tiredness or lack of energy.
- Early colorectal cancer has no symptoms, so regular screening is vital to early detection.

**A colonoscopy is a relatively safe screening test. You are often asleep during the test. The test should not be feared - It could save your life!**

## How do I get checked for colorectal cancer?

- There are a variety of screening tests available. Some may find polyps and colorectal cancer, while others mainly find colorectal cancer.
- Many colorectal screening tests can find and remove polyps before they turn into cancer.
- In general, regular screening for colorectal cancer should include:
  - A fecal occult blood test (FOBT) every year or a fecal immunochemical test (FIT) every year
  - A Stool DNA test (sDNA) every 3 years
  - Either a flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years or a colonoscopy every 10 years

- Other screening tests are available. Ask your health care provider which tests are right for you.

## When do I get checked for colorectal cancer?

- People at average risk should start screening tests at age 45.
- People at an increased risk should discuss their screening needs with their health care provider before age 45.
- People 76 years of age or older should discuss the need for continued colorectal screenings with their health care provider.

## How do I lower my risk for colorectal cancer?

Research is still being done to understand how to lower your risk for colorectal cancer. Following these general guidelines may help reduce your risk:

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Be physically active.
- Eat five or more servings of a variety of vegetables and fruits each day.
- Choose whole grains and fiber-rich foods.
- Limit your intake of processed and red meats.
- Do not smoke.
- Avoid excess alcohol.
- The effects of vitamins and other supplements are not clear. More research is needed to assess the potential benefits to colorectal cancer risk reduction.

\*This information is intended to serve as a guideline only. Screening needs vary for each individual depending on your overall cancer risk. Please consult with a health care professional to decide if screenings are right for you and to make an informed decision.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you would like to learn more about any of these topics, please visit [karmanos.org](http://karmanos.org).

To make an appointment or to reach the Patient & Community Education department call Karmanos at 1-800-527-6266.

Reliable information is also available from the following sources:

American Cancer Society  
877-ACS-2345  
[Cancer.org](http://Cancer.org)



CANCER INSTITUTE

Wayne State University

National Cancer Institute  
800-4-CANCER  
[Cancer.gov](http://Cancer.gov)

