

What is Colorectal Cancer?

Colorectal cancer, or CRC, is a disease of the colon or rectum, which are parts of the digestive system. Unlike most cancers, colorectal cancer is often preventable with screening and highly treatable when detected early.

Most cases of colorectal cancer occur in people ages 45 and older, but the disease is increasingly affecting younger people. Each year, about 150,000 Americans are diagnosed with this disease and more than 50,000 die.

Colorectal cancer may develop without symptoms. If you are 45 or older and at average risk, it's time to get screened.

Risk Factors

While anyone can develop colorectal cancer, a few conditions can increase risk.

- Inflammatory bowel diseases such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis
- A personal or family history of colorectal cancer or colorectal polyps
- A genetic syndrome such as familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP) or hereditary non-polyposis colorectal cancer (Lynch syndrome)
- Black/African Americans and Ashkenazi Jews are at higher risk

Common Symptoms

Colorectal cancer often develops without symptoms. When they occur, symptoms may include:

- Blood in or on stool
- Persistent unusual bowel movements like constipation or diarrhea
- Stomach pain, aches, or cramps that don't go away
- Losing weight for no reason

Preventing Colorectal Cancer

While screening is the most important step you can take to prevent colorectal cancer, it's not the only one. You may be able to lower your colorectal cancer risk with some simple lifestyle changes. Be proactive about keeping yourself healthy. It will pay off!

Treatment

Treatment for colorectal cancer (cancer of the colon or rectum) depends on the location of the tumor and the stage-of-diagnosis.

Stage describes the extent of the cancer in the body and is one of the most important factors in determining prognosis and treatment options.

The higher stages of cancer require advanced treatment options.

Stage 0 = Earliest stage of colorectal cancer

Stage 4 = Most advanced stage of colorectal cancer

Treatment may include

- Surgery
- Immuno Oncology
- Biological Therapy
- Biosimilars
- Radiation Therapy
- Liver Directed Therapy

More Information about Colorectal Cancer

Most colorectal cancers start as an abnormal tissue growth, called a polyp, inside the colon or rectum. With the help of screening tests, doctors can detect polyps, remove them, and prevent them from developing into colorectal cancer.

Colorectal cancer is the second most common cancer in the US among men and women combined. But it is highly treatable when it is discovered early. Even if it spreads into nearby lymph nodes, surgical treatment followed by chemotherapy is very effective.

In the most advanced cases — when the cancer has spread to the liver, lungs, or other sites — chemotherapy can often make surgery an option, prolonging and adding quality to life. Research is ongoing to learn more about this disease and provide more hope to people with all stages of colorectal cancer.

For more information go to www.ccalliance.org

African Americans and Colorectal Cancer

Colorectal cancer (CRC) is the third most common cancer in black men and women. African Americans are also diagnosed with CRC and young-onset CRC **more often** than members of other communities in the US. Colorectal cancer can be prevented through screening and is treatable when caught early. Generally, African Americans are at **higher risk** for cancer than other racial or ethnic groups in the US. More than **one in three** will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime.

Risk for African Americans

African Americans are at higher risk of colorectal cancer.

LIFETIME RISK OF COLORECTAL CANCER*

Diagnosis

1 in 23 for men

1 in 24 for women

Death

1 in 46 for men

1 in 51 for women

*Among African Americans

ESTIMATED ANNUAL IMPACT*

Diagnoses

Men: **9,880**

Women: **9,860**

Deaths

Men: **3,810**

Women: **3,300**

*Among African Americans, according to 2020 estimates from the American Cancer Society

COMMON SYMPTOMS:

Colorectal cancer first develops with few, if any, symptoms. If symptoms are present, they may include:

A change in bowel habits: These include diarrhea, constipation, a change in the consistency of your stool, or finding that your stools are narrower than usual

Ongoing stomach pains: Such as those from cramps, gas, pain, the feeling of being full or bloated, or that your bowel does not empty completely

Rectal bleeding: Blood (either bright red or very dark) in your stool

Weakness or fatigue: These may be in addition to unexplained weight loss, nausea, or vomiting

Colorectal cancer can develop without symptoms. That's why on-time screening is critical. Learn more at [GetScreened.org](https://www.getscreened.org).

STAGES OF DIAGNOSIS

Colorectal cancer is 90% beatable when caught early through screening. Once cancer has spread, it becomes much more difficult to treat. Nearly one-in-four colorectal cancer cases in African Americans are diagnosed at stages when it is harder to treat. **If you have symptoms, speak with a medical provider immediately.**



Prevention

GET SCREENED

Colorectal cancer can easily be prevented through screening. Colon cancer and rectal cancer are also highly treatable if caught early. All African Americans should have screening tests starting at age 45. Screening tests can be completed in a clinical setting or at home. Talk to a doctor about what's right for you.

Learn more at [GetScreened.org](https://www.getscreened.org).

FAMILY HISTORY

Most people with colorectal cancer do not have a family history of the disease. But some families have more cancer than we would expect. This suggests a genetic and/or hereditary factor.

You are at increased risk if one immediate family member (parent or sibling) or multiple relatives have colorectal cancer or polyps—abnormal growths in the colon or rectum.

Talk with your family about their medical history so you can take control of your health. If you're at increased risk, please talk with a doctor about how and when you should be screened.

LIVE A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

Beyond screening, there are many things you can do to live a healthy colon lifestyle. Know your risk factors and family history. Most importantly, listen to your body. If something doesn't feel right or changes, take control and speak to your doctor. Pre-existing conditions that increase risk of colorectal cancer include type 2 diabetes, obesity, inherited syndromes including Lynch, and inflammatory bowel disease.

Tips for a healthier colon:

- Eat fiber (fruits and vegetables)
- Drink plenty of water
- Take in whole grains
- Drink low-fat or fat-free milk
- Eat lean proteins (chicken, turkey) instead of processed meats (hot dogs, lunch meat)
- Reduce excess sugar and fried foods
- Limit alcohol intake
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Don't smoke
- Exercise regularly
- Monitor bathroom habits for any changes

Have questions? Call our free helpline at **(877) 422-2030**.

