

Colorectal Cancer Facts

Fact #1: Colorectal cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer-related deaths in men and women in the United States

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Cancer Society estimate that more than 50,000 Americans die from colon cancer each year – that's nearly 140 people a day.

Fact #2: Colon Cancer affects both men and women of all ethnicities

The lifetime risk of developing colon cancer is 4 – 5% in men and women, though men may get colon cancer at an earlier age than women. The risk of colon cancer increases with age. All races and ethnicities are at risk of colon cancer, but there is an increased risk among African-Americans.

Fact #3: Colon cancer may be inherited

People with a family history of colon cancer have two to five times more risk of having colon cancer. Some people may inherit colon cancer syndromes that increase their risk of developing the disease to nearly 100%. In anyone who has multiple family members with colon cancer or relatives diagnosed with colon cancer at a young age, genetic testing should be considered.

Fact #4: People with colon cancer may feel completely healthy

There may be subtle signs and symptoms if a person has colon cancer including fatigue, weakness, weight loss, abdominal pain and rectal bleeding. However, many people with colon cancer have no symptoms at all, especially during the early stages. This is why screening for colon cancer is extremely important.

Fact #5: Colorectal cancer is one of the most preventable types of cancer

Most colon cancers develop from small growths in the lining of the colon and rectum, called polyps. Certain types of polyps grow over time and transform into cancer. Finding and removing these “pre-cancerous” polyps can prevent the colon cancer.

Fact #6: Colonoscopy is the most effective colorectal cancer screening test

There are several types of colorectal screening and detection tests, such as:

- Stool testing
- Radiological imaging (virtual colonoscopy)
- Flexible sigmoidoscopy

However, colonoscopy is the *only* test in which the entire colon can be visualized using a colonoscope and pre-cancerous polyps can be removed.

Cancer risk is reduced by 90% after colonoscopy and polyp removal, according to estimates from the American College of Gastroenterology. Cancer incidence has dropped by 30% after the widespread uptake in screening colonoscopy.

Fact #7: All average risk people should have a screening colonoscopy as early as age 45

Colorectal cancer rates have been increasing in people under the age of 50. Due to this trend, the recommended age to begin screening colonoscopy was lowered from age 50 to 45 for average risk individuals.

Those at higher risk of colon cancer including people with a family history of colon cancer, inherited colorectal cancer syndrome, or a known predisposing gastrointestinal disorders. A screening colonoscopy is usually covered by insurance.

Fact #8: Colorectal screening saves lives

Early detection of colon cancer through screening can save a person's life. The 5-year survival rate after detection and treatment of early-stage colon cancer can be as high as 90%.

Unfortunately, the 5-year survival rate after treatment of late-stage colon cancer is as low as 12%. Treatment of colon cancer is much more effective and even curable if it is detected early.

Fact #9: Many Americans are not being screened for colon cancer when they should, despite the life-saving benefits

According to the CDC, up to a third of people are not up to date on current colorectal cancer screening recommendations. The majority of these people have never had any screening test performed.

Fact #10: Adopting healthy habits may help lower your colorectal cancer risk, too

A healthy diet that includes vegetables, fruits and whole grain fiber and is low in fats is associated with a lower risk of colon cancer. Avoiding tobacco and heavy alcohol use can decrease the risk of colorectal cancer. Regular physical activity and maintaining a normal body weight are beneficial as well.

Now that you know the facts, talk to your primary care provider about your colorectal cancer risks and when you would need to be screened.



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**.

