



Understanding Colorectal Cancer Screening

IMPROVING DIGESTIVE
HEALTH THROUGH
EXCELLENCE IN
ENDOSCOPY



Colorectal Cancer Screening Saves Lives

Each year, around 144,000 new cases of colorectal cancer occur in the U.S. Roughly 52,000 people die from the disease. Experts believe that increased awareness and screening could save at least 30,000 lives each year.

Colorectal cancer is highly preventable and can be detected by testing even before there are symptoms.

The American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy encourages everyone age 50 or older to get screened for colorectal cancer. If you have a family history of colorectal cancer or other risk factors, you may need to begin screening earlier. Talk with your doctor about when to begin screening.

If your primary healthcare provider has recommended a colonoscopy, you can find a physician with specialized training in endoscopy by using the Find a Doctor tool online at www.screen4coloncancer.org.

For more information about colorectal cancer screening, visit www.screen4coloncancer.org.

A colonoscopy screening exam is almost always done on an outpatient basis. The procedure typically takes less than 45 minutes.



What you need to know about colorectal cancer screening

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States (when men and women are combined).

It is the third leading cause of cancer-related deaths when men and women are considered separately (behind lung and prostate cancer in men, and behind lung and breast cancer in women). Every year, there are around 144,000 new cases of colorectal cancer in the U.S. Roughly 52,000 people die from colorectal cancer each year in the U.S. Experts believe that at least 30,000 lives could be saved each year with more awareness and screening.

Colorectal cancer affects both men and women.

Many people think of colorectal cancer as a disease that only affects men.

But the truth is that both men and women can have colorectal cancer. It is important for men and women to know about screening and prevention.

Colorectal cancer is highly preventable.

Before cancer develops in the colon or rectum, it usually begins as a polyp. A polyp is a small, abnormal growth in the tissue lining. A colonoscopy is a procedure that is used to look for polyps in the lining of the colon or rectum. During a colonoscopy, polyps can be removed to reduce the chances of colorectal cancer occurring in the future.

Colorectal cancer is treatable if caught early.

When colorectal cancer is found and treated when it is still small and before it has spread, the 5-year survival rate is about 90%. But because many people do not get screened, only 39% of

colorectal cancers are found at that early stage. Once the cancer has spread to nearby organs or lymph nodes, treating it is more difficult and the chance of remaining alive five years after the diagnosis is much lower.

For most people, screening for colorectal cancer begins at age 50.

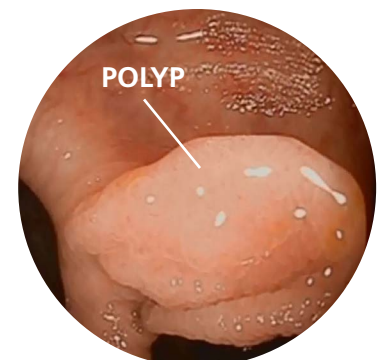
Age is the number one risk factor for colorectal cancer. Colorectal cancer can strike at any age, but 9 out of 10 people who get colorectal cancer are age 50 or older.

Colorectal cancer may be present even if there are no symptoms.

You should get screened for colorectal cancer beginning at age 50, even if you do not have any signs or symptoms. If you have a family history of colorectal cancer or polyps, or have had ulcerative colitis for a long time, you may need to begin screening before age 50. Talk with your doctor about your risk factors and when to get screened for colorectal cancer.

Colorectal cancer often does not have symptoms, but these symptoms might suggest colorectal cancer:

- Blood in your stools
- Stools that are narrower than normal
- Unexplained abdominal pain
- Change in bowel habits
- Unexplained anemia
- Unexplained weight loss



These symptoms may be caused by other non-cancerous conditions such as hemorrhoids, inflammation in the colon or irritable bowel syndrome. If you have any of these symptoms for more than a few days, talk with a gastrointestinal specialist.

There are several tests that screen for colorectal cancer. These tests are currently recommended for screening:

- A test for traces of blood (called occult blood test) on spontaneously passed stool every year (at a minimum)
- Double contrast barium enema every 5 years
- CT colonography every 5 years
- A flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years
- A colonoscopy every 10 years

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Colorectal cancer is cancer that forms in the colon or rectum. Colon cancer is another name commonly used for colorectal cancer.

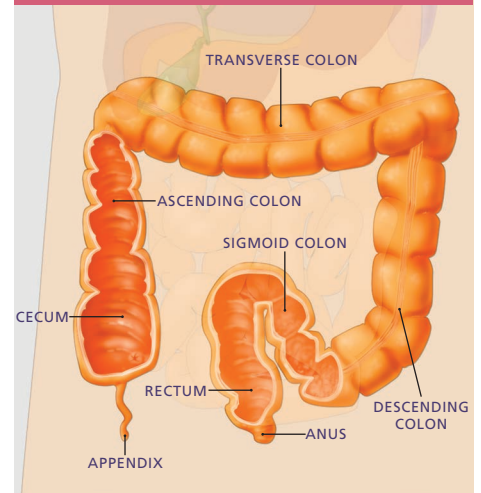
Gastroenterologists usually recommend colonoscopy for most people because the test actually helps prevent colorectal cancer.

Colonoscopy is the only screening test that can detect (find polyps or cancer) and prevent colorectal cancer (by removing polyps) during the same exam. Talk with your doctor about which screening test is best for you.

Colonoscopy is a safe, generally well-tolerated procedure.

Colonoscopy is a common outpatient procedure. Most patients do not have pain during their colonoscopy. Before the procedure, medicine is typically given to help the patient relax and to reduce discomfort. During the procedure, a thin, flexible tube is inserted into the rectum and the entire colon is examined. The procedure usually takes about 30 minutes. Complications from a colonoscopy are rare, but may occur. Your doctor will talk to you about possible complications before the procedure.

During a colonoscopy, the physician passes the endoscope through your rectum and into the colon to examine the lining of the colon wall for abnormalities such as polyps.



Important Reminder: This information is intended only to provide general guidance. It does not provide definitive medical advice. It is very important that you consult your doctor about your specific condition.



The endoscope is a thin, flexible tube with a camera and a light on the end of it. During the procedure, the physician looks at the lining of the colon wall in real time on a monitor.



Since its founding in 1941, ASGE has been dedicated to advancing patient care and digestive health by promoting excellence in gastrointestinal endoscopy. This information is the opinion of and provided by the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy.

Gastrointestinal endoscopy helps patients through screening, diagnosis and treatment of digestive diseases. Visit www.asge.org to learn how you can support GI endoscopic research, education and public outreach through a donation to the ASGE Foundation.

For more information, visit www.asge.org or www.screen4coloncancer.org

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