WISCONSIN COLLABORATIVE for HEALTHCARE QUALITY

WCHQ Health Insights

Colorectal Cancer in Wisconsin | March 2026

Colorectal cancer (CRC) affects approximately **2,500 Wisconsinites** each year, yet only 40% are diagnosed at an early stage, when treatment is most effective.

880 deaths annually in Wisconsin

60% diagnosed at stage 2 or later

Native American population has highest incidence of CRC

Increasing among patients aged 20 - 49

WHY THIS MATTERS

CRC is a common cancer that can be prevented by early detection of pre-cancerous polyps during routine screenings.

RETURN ON IMPROVEMENT

By improving CRC screening rates, WI health systems have avoided over **$51 million** in healthcare costs and prevented over **1,700 cases** of colorectal cancer.

IMPACT ON WISCONSIN

- In WI, approximately 2,500 new CRCs are diagnosed each year and 880 people die.
- CRC incidence varies by race, ethnicity, and sex, with higher rates in men and Native Americans; Black patients have the highest mortality rate.

WHAT LAWMAKERS SHOULD KNOW

Positive Movement

CRC incidence and mortality continue to decrease due to improvements in early screening.

Concerning Trend

Young-onset CRC (before age 50) is increasing in incidence in WI and nationally.

Policy Implication

Targeted prevention and early detection improve health outcomes while helping control healthcare spending .

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IMPROVING COLORECTAL CANCER SCREENING RATES

Statewide Improvement Goal: Screen an additional 27,500 patients for CRC

Increase accessibility of screening for all patients

Focus on younger patients who now qualify for screening

Education for providers on options for CRC screening

Target Underserved Communities

CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT RESULTS

Improving Colorectal Cancer Screening Rates

- **36,800** additional patients screened for colorectal cancer since 2023.

By improving colorectal cancer screening, health systems can prevent precancerous polyps from becoming cancerous and identify cancer in the earliest stages when it is most treatable.

CRC screening guidelines were recently updated to include patients aged 45 – 50. Screening patients at a younger age will catch more cancers earlier.

ABOUT WCHQ

We are Wisconsin's leading electronic health record data hub, connecting over 80% of primary care providers statewide. With 15+ years of clinical data, we offer cost-effective, research-ready resources to researchers and industry partners. Our infrastructure drives data innovation, health equity, and better outcomes, supporting $30M+ in grant-funded research and aiding patient care improvements across Wisconsin.

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