

Colorectal Cancer: Important Facts

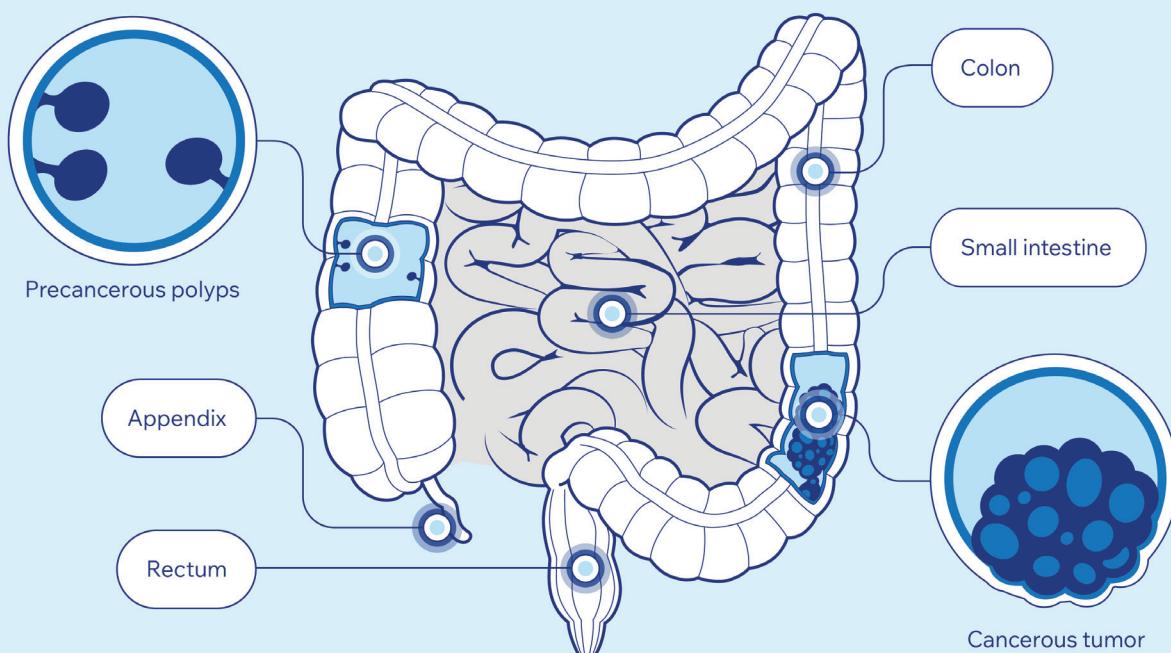
Nearly 2 million people are diagnosed with colorectal cancer each year. It is common, and it is a top cause of cancer death. It affects both men and women and occurs in adults of all ages.

What is Colorectal Cancer?

Colorectal cancer (CRC) is a type of cancer that affects the colon or rectum. The colon and rectum are part of the digestive tract, which absorbs nutrients and water from the food you eat and gets rid of waste from the body.

Catching It Early is Crucial

Early detection is the key to reducing death rates. Colorectal cancer often starts as a non-cancerous polyp that can be removed early to help prevent the development of cancer.



Colorectal Cancer Risk Factors

- Having a family member who had colon cancer
- A diet high in fat or processed meats and low in fruits and vegetable
- Not exercising
- Being overweight
- Smoking cigarettes
- Drinking a lot of alcohol
- Having certain bowel diseases like Crohn's or ulcerative colitis
- Inherited conditions like Lynch syndrome or FAP

If you are at higher risk, talk to your doctor about possibly starting screening earlier.

Colorectal Cancer Symptoms

-  Changes in bowel habits, such as constipation or diarrhea, or a change in the stool itself
-  Rectal Bleeding
-  Blood in or on the stool (bowel movement)
-  Unintentional or unexplained weight loss
-  Abdominal pain or bloating

If you have any of these symptoms, please talk to your doctor or other healthcare provider.

Screening Saves Lives

What Is Screening?

It is checking for cancer before you feel sick or have any symptoms.

When to Start Screening

Screening typically starts at age 50, but many places, including the US, now recommend beginning at age 45. If you have risk factors, talk to your doctor about whether you should start screening earlier.

Colonoscopy

A colonoscopy is a comprehensive test where doctors can see inside your colon and rectum. They can remove any polyps they find. Colonoscopy is often called the “gold standard” test for colorectal cancer because it is the only test that combines screening, diagnosis, and potential treatment of polyps in one procedure.

Other Screening Methods

Colorectal cancer screening is also done with

- stool testing (FIT, FOBT, stool DNA tests)
- imaging tests (barium enema, virtual colonoscopy)
- blood testing (blood DNA test, Shield).

All of these tests require a follow-up colonoscopy if an abnormal result is found.

Talk to your doctor about which screening test is best for you. Some tests may not be available in all areas.

For more information about colorectal cancer, screening, risk factors, and treatment, please visit globalcca.org