

Prevent Colorectal Cancer

Everyone should get screened regularly, starting at age 50.

Colorectal cancer is a cancer of the colon or rectum. The colon and rectum are where stool is stored until it leaves the body. Colorectal cancer is the second most common cause of cancer deaths in the United States (after lung cancer).

Colorectal Cancer Usually Has No Early Symptoms

This cancer begins when cells inside the colon or rectum begin changing. In the early stages, these cells usually form a harmless mass called a *polyp*. Unless they are very large, most polyps do not cause any symptoms. At this stage, polyps can be easily removed.

If a polyp is not found and removed, it can become cancerous over time. The cancer can then spread to other parts of the body, such as your liver or lung. It is much harder to treat at that point. Do NOT wait until symptoms show before seeing a doctor—it may be too late!



Both Men and Women Should Get Screened Regularly

Colorectal cancer can affect everyone, including women, men, and people with no family history of the disease. To protect yourself, get screened for colorectal cancer beginning at age 50. You may need earlier screening if you or a family member has had polyps or colorectal cancer. The earlier a polyp or cancer is found, the more likely the treatment will work. Be proactive and take control of your health to keep yourself and your family healthy.

Common Tests to Detect Signs of Colorectal Cancer

Remember that while some of these screening tests may be uncomfortable, its benefits are much more important. Talk to your doctor about which tests are best for you.

- **Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT):** (Every year) Your stool samples are checked for hidden blood. Blood in the stool can mean polyps or cancer, and further testing may be needed.
- **Colonoscopy:** (Every 10 years) A thin tube with a camera at the end is inserted through the anus to examine the entire rectum and colon. Any polyps found will be removed during the test.

Lower Your Risk: Stay Healthy

- **Don't smoke.** For free help quitting, call the Charles B. Wang Community Health Center at (212) 966-0461.
- **Limit your alcohol intake.** Have no more than one (for women) or two (for men) drinks a day.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** Eat more fiber, less fat.
- **Exercise regularly.** Get at least 30 minutes of exercise a day.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.**

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