



WELCOME TO THE ROLLIN' COLON

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR COLON

Cancer of the colon or rectum is also called colorectal cancer. In the United States, colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States when men and women are considered separately, and the second leading cause when both sexes are combined. It is expected to cause about 50,830 deaths during 2013.

It is more common in people over 50, and the risk increases with age. You are also more likely to get it if you have

- Polyps - growths inside the colon and rectum that may become cancerous
- A diet that is high in fat
- A family history or personal history of colorectal cancer
- Ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease

Symptoms: can include blood in the stool, narrower stools, a change in bowel habits and general stomach discomfort. However, you may not have symptoms at first, so screening is important. Everyone who is 50 or older should be screened for colorectal cancer. Colonoscopy is one method that your doctor can use to screen for colorectal cancer. Treatments for colorectal cancer include surgery, chemotherapy, radiation or a combination.

Screening: Why is it important?

Screening is checking for health problems before they cause symptoms. Colorectal cancer screening can detect cancer; polyps; nonpolypoid lesions, which are flat or slightly depressed areas of abnormal cell growth; and other conditions. Nonpolypoid lesions occur less often than polyps, but they can also develop into colorectal cancer.

If colorectal cancer screening reveals a problem, diagnosis and treatment can occur promptly. In addition, finding and removing polyps or other areas of abnormal cell growth may be one of the most effective ways to prevent colorectal cancer development. Also, colorectal cancer is generally more treatable when it is found early, before it has had a chance to spread.

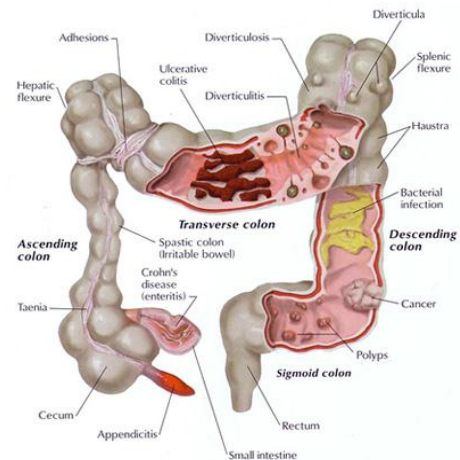
What methods are used to screen people for colorectal cancer?

Health care providers may suggest one or more of the following tests for colorectal cancer screening:

- **Fecal occult blood test (FOBT), Sigmoidoscopy, Colonoscopy, Virtual Colonoscopy**

Conditions to know about:

1. **Colitis** - Colitis is a general term for a number of causes that result in inflammation of the bowel (gastrointestinal system including the large and small intestine). It is classed as an inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). The colon (large bowel) collects and stores the waste products of digestion. The colon is a long muscular tube that pushes undigested food waste towards the end of the gastrointestinal system (anus). The wall of the colon has numerous layers. The inner layers (mucosal layer) come into contact with the fluid and allow water and electrolyte absorption to help solidify the feces. The mucosal layer is where the colon inflammation occurs. It is also responsible for the symptoms of colitis.



2. **Ulcerative Colitis** - Ulcerative colitis is a disease that causes ulcers in the lining of the rectum and colon. It is one of a group of diseases called inflammatory bowel disease. Ulcers form where inflammation has killed the cells that usually line the colon. Ulcerative colitis can happen at any age, but it usually starts between the ages of 15 and 30. It tends to run in families. The most common symptoms are pain in the abdomen and bloody diarrhea. Other symptoms may include anemia, severe tiredness, weight loss, loss of appetite, bleeding from the rectum, sores on the skin and joint pain. Children with the disease may have growth problems.

About half of people with ulcerative colitis have mild symptoms. Several types of drugs can help control ulcerative colitis. Some people have long periods of remission, when they are free of symptoms. In severe cases, doctors must remove the colon.

3. **Crohn's Disease** - Crohn's disease causes inflammation of the digestive system. It is one of a group of diseases called inflammatory bowel disease. The disease can affect any area from the mouth to the anus. It often affects the lower part of the small intestine called the ileum.

Crohn's disease seems to run in some families. It can occur in people of all age groups but is most often diagnosed in young adults. Common symptoms are pain in the abdomen and diarrhea. Bleeding from the rectum, weight loss, joint pain, skin problems and fever may also occur. Children with the disease may have growth problems. Other problems can include intestinal blockage and malnutrition.

Treatment may include medicines, nutrition supplements, surgery or a combination of these options. Some people have long periods of remission, when they are free of symptoms.

4. **Irritable Bowel Syndrome** - Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a problem that affects the large intestine. It can cause abdominal cramping, bloating and a change in bowel habits. Some people with the disorder have constipation. Some have diarrhea. Some go back and forth between constipation and diarrhea. Although IBS can cause a great deal of discomfort, it does not harm the intestines.

IBS is a common disorder and happens more often in women than men. No one knows the exact cause of IBS. There is no specific test for IBS. However, your doctor may run tests to be sure you don't have other diseases. These tests may include stool sampling tests, blood tests and x-rays. Your doctor may also do a test called a sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy. Most people diagnosed with IBS can control their symptoms with diet, stress management and medicine.

5. **Colon Polyps** - A polyp is an extra piece of tissue that grows inside your body. Colonic polyps grow in the large intestine, or colon. Most polyps are not dangerous. However, some polyps may turn into cancer or already be cancer. To be safe, doctors remove polyps and test them. Polyps can be removed when a doctor examines the inside of the large intestine during a colonoscopy.

Anyone can get polyps, but certain people are more likely than others. You may have a greater chance of getting polyps if you

- Are over age 50
- Have had polyps before
- Have a family member with polyps
- Have a family history of colon cancer

Most colon polyps do not cause symptoms. If you have symptoms, they may include blood on your underwear or on toilet paper after a bowel movement, blood in your stool, or constipation or diarrhea lasting more than a week.

NIH: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive Diseases