

What is colorectal cancer?

Colorectal cancer is cancer that occurs in the colon or rectum. The colon is the large intestine or large bowel. The rectum is the passageway that connects the colon to the anus.

Among cancers that affect both men and women, colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States. Every year, about 140,000 Americans are diagnosed with colorectal cancer, and more than 50,000 people die from it. But this disease is highly preventable by getting screened beginning at age 50.

Colorectal cancer risk factors

Your risk for colorectal cancer may be higher than average if:

- You or a close relative has had colorectal polyps or colorectal cancer.
- You have inflammatory bowel disease.
- You have a genetic syndrome such as familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP) or hereditary non-polyposis colorectal cancer.

How can you lower your risk of developing colorectal cancer?

You can do these things to help lower your colon cancer risk:

- Get screened
- Eat lots of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains
- Exercise regularly
- Don't smoke
- Watch your weight
- Limit alcohol intake

Mobile apps

- [Colonoscopy Helper](#)
- [Colonoscopy Prep Assistant](#)
- [My Fitness Pal](#)

Tips from our docs

This month, our healthy tip is brought to you by **Kiko Torres, MD**, our Senior Medical Officer.

Screening tests help prevent colorectal cancer by finding precancerous polyps (abnormal growths) so they can be removed. Screening also finds this cancer early, when treatment can be most effective. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends that adults between the ages of 50 and 75 be screened for colorectal cancer. The decision to be screened after age 75 should be made on an individual basis. Several different screening tests can be used to find polyps or colorectal cancer.

If you are 50 or older, getting a colorectal cancer screening test could save your life. Here's how:

- Colorectal cancer usually starts from precancerous polyps in the colon or rectum. A polyp is a growth that shouldn't be there.
- Over time, some polyps can turn into cancer.
- Screening tests can find precancerous polyps, so they can be removed before they turn into cancer.
- Screening tests also can find colorectal cancer early, when treatment works best.

People at increased risk for colorectal cancer may need earlier or more frequent tests than other people. Talk to your doctor about when to begin screening, which test is right for you, and how often you should be tested.

Additional resources

- [American Cancer Society](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Colorectal Cancer](#)
- [National Colorectal Cancer Alliance](#)
- [National Cancer Institute](#)