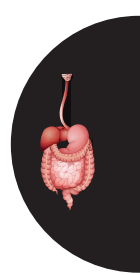
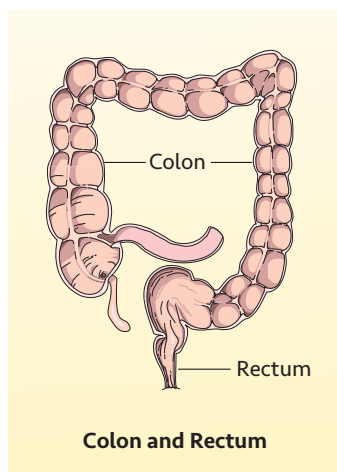


Colon & rectal cancers



The colon and rectum form the large bowel. The colon is the upper 5 to 6 feet. The rectum is the last 6 to 8 inches.

When abnormal cells grow in the colon or rectum, a cancerous tumor may form. These tumors grow slowly. They may get big and block the bowel.



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Colon and rectal cancers can occur without clear symptoms. For this reason, screening is important. When symptoms occur, they include:

- A change in bowel habits that lasts more than a few days, including diarrhea or constipation
- Frequent gas pains, cramps, bloating, or feelings of fullness in the abdomen
- Red or dark blood in or on the stool or rectal bleeding. Pencil thin stools.
- Fatigue and/or iron deficiency anemia in men and older women
- A feeling that the bowel does not empty completely
- Weight loss for no known reason



CAUSES, RISK FACTORS & CARE

Risk factors:

- Polyps (benign growths that can become cancerous over time). Most colon and rectal cancers develop from polyps.
- Family history of colon or rectal cancer. Unless it is treated, an inherited condition called Familial Polyposis puts a person at a very high risk.
- Having ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease
- Aging. Colon and rectal cancers occur most often in people over age 50.
- Smoking. Heavy alcohol use.
- Eating a diet high in red meats and processed meats
- Lack of exercise and/or being overweight or obese

Care:

Finding and treating the cancer early is vital. Treatment includes:

- Surgery, including cryosurgery: During this procedure, radio waves travel through electrodes to heat and destroy abnormal cells.
- Chemotherapy: This uses medicines to destroy cancer cells.
- Radiation therapy: This therapy uses high doses of radiation to kill cancer cells and stop them from spreading.
- Targeted therapy: This uses drugs to attack specific cells.
- Immunotherapy: This helps your immune system fight and destroy cancer cells.





PREVENTION

Colon and rectal cancers are completely curable if found early. Have screening tests beginning at age 45, as advised by your doctor:

- High-sensitivity fecal occult blood test
- Flexible sigmoidoscopy
- Colonoscopy
- DNA test stool

How often testing needs to be done depends on the test(s) given. {**Note:** If you have a family history of colon polyps or colon or rectal cancers, or a condition associated with a higher risk of colorectal cancer, screening tests may need to be started sooner than age 45.}

- Have colon polyps removed.
- Eat plenty of fruits, veggies, and whole grains. Limit red and processed meat.

SELF-CARE

- Schedule and go to follow-up exams.
- Join a cancer support group.
- Keep up with your daily routine, like going to work, spending time with family and friends, and taking part in activities. Do things that are fun and bring you joy.
- Get regular physical activity to help keep you strong and feeling good.
- Eat a healthy, mostly plant-based diet.

CONTACT DOCTOR WHEN:

- You have any symptoms of colon and rectal cancer.
- You need to schedule screening tests for colon and rectal cancer. Follow the schedule your doctor advises.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

The National Cancer Institute
800-4-CANCER (422-6237)
cancer.gov

The American Cancer Society
800-227-2345
cancer.org

