



Colon Cancer Prevention

Colon cancer, unlike most other forms of cancer, is PREVENTABLE. So it might be surprising to hear that according to the National Cancer Institute, colon cancer is the 2nd deadliest form of cancer among men and women in the U.S. By following the recommended guidelines for colon cancer screening, your doctor can find colon polyps and remove them, BEFORE they become cancerous.

What is Colon Cancer?

Colon cancer forms in the tissues of the colon, which is the largest part of the intestine. Rectal cancer forms in the tissues of the rectum, which is the last several inches of the large intestine before the anus. Either of these cancers is called colorectal cancer. There are several screening procedures available that may detect colorectal cancer, however, a colonoscopy is the most thorough and complete examination of the entire colon and rectal anatomy.

Colon Polyps and Colon Cancer

A colon polyp is a growth of extra tissue in the lining of the bowel, colon, or large intestine. While some can be cancerous, most are not. However, almost all cases of colon cancer begin as a polyp. Removing polyps early eliminates the chance that colon cancer will develop from those polyps.

Polyps generally do not cause symptoms and, therefore, the average person has no idea they may be present. Your individual medical history and family medical history, combined with any symptoms you may be experiencing, will help your physician determine an appropriate colon cancer screening program for you.

- Symptoms
- Asymptomatic (no symptoms)
- Anemia
- Blood in the stool
- Change in bowel habits
- Irregular bowel habits
- Weight loss
- Risk Factors
- Age: Over 50 (45 for African Americans)
- Genetics: Personal or family history of colon polyps or colon cancer
- Inflammatory bowel disease (Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis)
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Lifestyle habits: smoking, excessive alcohol intake, diet high in fat

Diagnostic Testing

The foremost diagnostic “test” for any condition is a thorough exam and consultation with a physician, including a review of your individual and family history. In addition, your physician may recommend any of the following tests or procedures, which may provide further diagnostic value:

- Colonoscopy
- Flexible Sigmoidoscopy
- Fecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT)

Other Resources

www.cancer.org

www.cancer.gov

www.preventcancer.org/colorectal