



AUGUST 2023



Colon Cancer and Prevention

Colorectal cancer, also known as colon cancer or rectal cancer, occurs in the colon or rectum. It is the third most common cancer worldwide and the third leading cause of cancer-related deaths. Several factors can increase an individual's risk of developing colorectal cancer. Some of these risk factors can be controlled, while others cannot.

Colorectal cancer common risk factors:

Age: The risk of developing colorectal cancer increases with age. Most cases are diagnosed in people over the age of 50.

Family history: Having a close relative (parent, sibling, or child) who has had colorectal cancer increases your risk, especially if they were diagnosed before the age of 45 or if you have multiple affected family members.
Inherited syndromes: Genetic syndromes like Lynch syndrome (hereditary non-polyposis colorectal cancer or HNPCC) or familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP) can significantly increase the risk of developing colorectal cancer.

Personal history: A personal history of colorectal polyps or colorectal cancer, inflammatory bowel disease (such as ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease), or certain types of ovarian, endometrial, or breast cancer can increase the risk of colorectal cancer.

Race and ethnicity: African Americans and Ashkenazi Jews have a higher risk of colorectal cancer compared to other racial and ethnic groups.

Diet: Diets high in red meat (beef, pork, and lamb) and processed meats (like hot dogs and some deli meats) can increase the risk of colorectal cancer. Consuming a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains may help reduce the risk.

Physical inactivity: Lack of regular physical activity increases the risk of colorectal cancer.

Obesity: Being overweight or obese increases the risk of developing and dying from colorectal cancer.

Smoking: Long-term smoking can increase the risk of colorectal cancer.

Alcohol consumption: Heavy alcohol use (more than 2 drinks per day for men and more than 1 drink per day for women) increases the risk of colorectal cancer.

Type 2 diabetes: People with type 2 diabetes have an increased risk of colorectal cancer.

There are several ways to reduce your risk of developing colorectal cancer:
Get screened regularly: Regular screening tests can help detect colorectal cancer early when it is most treatable. The American Cancer Society recommends that people at average risk of colorectal cancer start regular screening at age 45, and those at higher risk start earlier.

Eat a healthy diet: A diet that is high in fiber and low in fat and red meat may help reduce your risk of colorectal cancer. Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

Focus on eating more:

Fiber-rich foods like beans, broccoli, Brussel sprouts, carrots and oats.

Fiber helps promote regularity and helps prevent constipation.

Colorful vegetables and fruits like bell peppers, spinach, kale, tomatoes, berries and squash. They are high in antioxidants which help prevent cell damage.

Fish and poultry in place of red meat. Limit red meat and processed meats like hot dogs and bacon which are high in saturated fat and may increase cancer risk. Exercise regularly: Regular physical activity can help reduce your risk of colorectal cancer. Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise, such as brisk walking, most days of the week.

Maintain a healthy weight: Being overweight or obese increases your risk of colorectal cancer. Try to maintain a healthy weight through a combination of regular exercise and a healthy diet.

Limit alcohol consumption: Drinking alcohol can increase your risk of colorectal cancer. If you choose to drink, limit your consumption to no more than one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men.

Don't smoke: Smoking is a major risk factor for many types of cancer, including colorectal cancer. If you smoke, quit.

Know your family history: If you have a family history of colorectal cancer or certain other types of cancer, you may be at higher risk. Talk to your doctor about when you should start getting screened and how often.

Reduce stress: Some research suggests that chronic stress may increase the risk of colorectal cancer in some people. Try relaxation techniques like yoga, meditation, deep breathing to lower your stress levels.