

About Colon Cancer

Estimated new cases and deaths from colon and rectum cancer in the United States in 2017

New cases: 135,430

Deaths: 50,260

Colon and rectum cancer represent
8.4% of all cancer deaths

Colon cancer is cancer of the large intestine (colon), the lower part of your digestive system. Rectum cancer is cancer of the last 6 inches of the colon. Together, they're often referred to as colorectal cancers.

In the United States, colorectal cancer is the fourth most common cancer in men, after skin, prostate, and lung cancer. It is also the fourth most common cancer in women, after skin, breast, and lung cancer.

Most cases of colon cancer begin as small, noncancerous (benign) clumps of cells called adenomatous polyps. Over time some of these polyps become colon cancers. Polyps may be small and produce few, if any, symptoms.

Symptoms:

A common symptom of colorectal cancer is a change in bowel habits. Symptoms include:

- Having diarrhea or constipation
- Feeling that your bowel does not empty completely
- Finding blood (either bright red or very dark) in your stool
- Finding your stools are narrower than usual
- Frequently having gas pains or cramps, or feeling full or bloated
- Losing weight with no known reason
- Feeling very tired all the time
- Having nausea or vomiting

Most often, these symptoms are not due to cancer. Other health problems can cause the same symptoms. Anyone with these symptoms should see a doctor to be diagnosed and treated as early as possible.

The following risk factors may increase the risk of colorectal cancer:

- Age (especially 50 and over)
- Colorectal polyps
- Family History of colorectal cancer
- Genetic alterations
- Personal history of cancer
- Ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease
- Diet
- Cigarette Smoking

Not all polyps become cancerous, but nearly every colon cancer starts out as a polyp.

Finding and removing polyps may prevent colorectal cancer. Also, treatment for colorectal cancer is more likely to be effective when the disease is found early