



Colon Cancer

Cancer of the colon or rectum is the 4th most common cancer in U.S. for men and women. It is the 2nd leading cause of death by cancer (after lung)—for both men and women. Early detection and screenings are vital to the treatment of this cancer. If detected and treated early, the 5-year survival rate is 90%!

It is recommended that men and women over the age of 50 (younger, if have family history), be screened through one of a variety of methods, which include:

1. Fecal occult blood test (checks for blood in stool).
2. Flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years (only examines about 1/3, or the last 2 feet of the intestines).
3. Annual fecal occult blood test AND flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years.
4. Double-contrast barium enema every 5 years (still requires colonoscopy if lesions detected).
5. Colonoscopy every 10 years (for detection AND removal of lesions in entire colon and rectum).

Symptoms include the following:

- Change in bowel habits, such as diarrhea, constipation, etc. that lasts for more than a few days.
- Feeling the need to have a bowel movement that is not relieved by doing so.
- Rectal bleeding or blood in the stool.
- Cramping or steady abdominal pain.
- Weakness and fatigue.

It is also possible to have colon cancer and not have any symptoms, which is why the screenings are so important.

For more information, visit the American Cancer Society at www.cancer.org and the National Cancer Institute at www.cancer.gov.

