

# Colorectal Cancer: What You Need to Know



## What is Colorectal Cancer?

Colorectal cancer (CRC) is the broad term for cancer that starts in the colon or rectum. These cancers often begin as small growths called polyps. While most polyps are harmless, some can turn into cancer if they aren't found and removed.

## Who is Affected by Colorectal?

CRC can affect anyone, but some groups of people face more challenges in preventing or treating it. Things like ethnicity, where you live, whether you have regular access to doctors, and other social and economic factors play a role.

## High-Risk Groups

- Black men are about 20% more likely to get CRC than White men.
- Black men are also 40% more likely to die from the disease.
- People of color often have lower colonoscopy screening rates, lower rates with a colonoscopy and face more delays in care.
- CRC is rising in younger adults under 50, especially among people of color - so it's important to know your risk, even before age 45.

## Screening Saves Lives

- Most adults should start getting a colonoscopy at age 45. This test checks for polyps and other warning signs in your colon before they become cancer.
- If your test is normal, you may not need another test for 10 years.
- If you know you have a family history of CRC, you may need testing earlier or more often.

## Early Signs of Colon Cancer

The best way to detect colon cancer early is to pay attention to changes in your body. Talk to your healthcare team if you notice:

- Ongoing bowel changes like diarrhea, constipation, or feeling like your bowel doesn't completely empty.
- Bright red or dark and tar-like blood in your stool.
- Stomach cramps, pain, or gas that doesn't go away.
- Unusual fatigue, or feeling tired or weak.
- Unexplained weight loss.

## What you Can Do:

Colon and rectal cancers have a survival rate of more than 90% when caught early.

- Ask your healthcare team when to get screened.
- Report symptoms like severe diarrhea, stomach cramping, and blood in your stool.
- Don't wait for these signs to go away on their own - your body may be trying to tell you something.

