










# SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

## What are the symptoms?

Many common digestive ailments have similar symptoms, and symptoms don't always mean a serious condition exists. Long term discomfort, recurring or multiple symptoms, however, should be checked out by a doctor.

-  Change in bowel habits, including diarrhea for more than 3 days or constipation more than 2 weeks
-  Change in the color or shape of the stool
-  Rectal bleeding, blood in the stool, or in the toilet after having a bowel movement
-  Stomach discomfort or cramping, including a continual feeling of discomfort or urge to have a bowel movement
-  Fatigue or weakness
-  Unexplained weight loss
-  Anemia
-  Feeling bloated
-  No symptoms at all

Currently **6** out of **10** patients nationwide are diagnosed with late stage disease. Many because they put off being screened.

Colon cancer affects men and women **equally**.



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Get Your Rear in Gear®, Tour de Tush®, and Caboose Cup™ are the signature fundraising events of the Colon Cancer Coalition. Held in nearly 40 cities annually, funds raised stay in local communities to build screening, awareness, and patient support programs.

Find an event near you at [coloncancercoalition.org/events](https://coloncancercoalition.org/events)

For more information about colon cancer, visit: [coloncancercoalition.org](https://coloncancercoalition.org)

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# COLON CANCER: ABOUT & SYMPTOMS



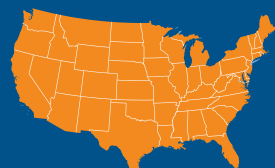
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# WHAT IS COLON CANCER?

Colon cancer is one of the most common forms of cancer. Understanding the disease is important for those who have been diagnosed with it, as well as those trying to prevent it.



**2nd** leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States.

Most colon cancer cases occur in adults over 50, but more-and-more cases are occurring in younger adults, and cancer in younger people is often discovered in more advanced stages.

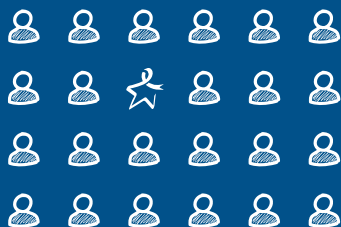
## Colon Cancer vs. Colorectal Cancer

Colon cancer starts in the colon, or large intestine. The colon is responsible for removing fluid and nutrients from the food you eat, then pushing the remaining waste into the rectum where it can be expelled from the body.

Colorectal cancer includes cancers of the colon, but also cancers that form in the rectum, the last part of the digestive tract where stool is expelled through the anus.

For our purposes, colon cancer and colorectal cancer are interchangeable.

**1** in **24** develops colon cancer.



# YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

## How does colon cancer start?

Most start as benign polyps, or growths, on the lining of the colon. Polyps often produce no symptoms and many may become cancerous over time.

The best way to detect polyps is through a colonoscopy. When a physician finds a polyp during a colonoscopy, it is removed and sent to a lab for testing.

Some hereditary conditions exist where cancer develops without polyps. Be sure to learn your family's health and cancer history.

**African Americans** and **Hispanics** are more likely to be diagnosed with colorectal cancer in its advanced stages.

## Who gets colon cancer?



Colon cancer affects men and women equally, all age groups and nationalities, but there are some risk factors for the disease, including:

- Aging: the risk for polyps and cancer increase as we age, especially over the age of 50
- A family history of polyps or of colon cancer
- Obesity
- Smoking
- A high fat and/or low fiber diet
- Moderate to heavy alcohol consumption
- Diet high in red and processed meat

Currently **1** in **5** are diagnosed under 54.

## When should screening start?



People with average risk and no family history should begin screening at the age of 45. A family history of polyps or colorectal cancer means screening should start ten years before a loved one was diagnosed or a polyp was found.

Every patient is different. Please talk with your doctors about your health history to determine when colon cancer screening should begin for you.

**9** out of **10** patients will survive 5+ years when colon cancer is caught in early (localized) stages. But only **1** in **10** will reach the 5 year mark when the disease is diagnosed in late stages.

## Can colon cancer be prevented?

Talk to your primary care provider about ways to improve your diet and lifestyle to prevent colon cancer and about scheduling preventive screenings. Pre-cancerous polyps can be removed before they become cancer, preventing the disease.

Other preventive measures:

- Know your family's cancer history
- Eat a diet high in fiber
- Exercise
- Be aware of your body and any symptoms
- Stay up-to-date on your colon cancer screening

## But I don't have symptoms. I don't need to be screened.

Most colon cancer patients report having no symptoms prior to their diagnosis. Don't wait for symptoms to occur to get screened for colon cancer if you are over the age of 45 or if you have a family history of the disease. In addition to a colonoscopy, there are several non-invasive, inexpensive tests that can be done in the privacy of your home or through a routine doctor's visit. Talk to your doctor about the best option for you.