

FACT SHEET: Colorectal Cancer (CRC)

- *Understanding colorectal cancer:* [Colorectal cancer](#) is cancer of the colon (the large bowel or large intestine) and the rectum. Colorectal cancer may begin as noncancerous polyps, which are grape-like growths on the lining of the colon and rectum. For reasons that are not fully understood, these polyps may become cancerous.
- *Risk of colorectal cancer:* According to the American Cancer Society (ACS), the lifetime risk of developing colorectal cancer is about 1 in 20 (5%), and it is the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths for U.S. men and women combined. Recent ACS statistics estimate 142,000 new cases of colorectal cancers will be diagnosed annually, with the disease claiming more than 50,000 American lives each year.ⁱ
- *Early detection and better treatments:* For the past 20 years, the death rate from colorectal cancer for both men and women has been dropping. The American Cancer Society attributes this drop to several likely reasons. One reason is that screening is allowing many polyps to be detected and removed before they can develop into cancers. Another reason is that cancers are being caught earlier when the disease is easier to cure. And finally, improved treatments for colorectal cancers have helped boost survivor rates. As a result, there are now more than 1 million survivors of the disease in the United States.ⁱ
- *Screening guidelines:* Beginning at age 50, men and women should be screened for colorectal cancer. If you have a personal or family history of cancer or colorectal polyps, or a personal history of inflammatory bowel disease, talk to your healthcare provider about earlier screening tests. A colonoscopy is the best way to find and remove colon polyps, preventing colorectal cancer before it starts or catching cancer at its earliest, most curable stage.
- *Risk factors:* Colon cancer can affect anyone, and it is important to get a colonoscopy if you have symptoms at any age. Risk factors can include:
 - Being 50 or older
 - Having a personal or family history of colorectal polyps, inflammatory bowel disease, ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease, or colorectal, ovarian, endometrial, breast or other cancers of the GI tract or the female reproductive system
 - Being of African-American or Hispanic descent
 - Experiencing symptoms such as a change in bowel habits, rectal bleeding, blood in the stool, cramping or stomach pain, feeling bloated or full, gas pains, weakness and fatigue, decreased appetite and/or weight loss, and vomiting
 - Having a lifestyle that includes inactivity, poor diet, smoking and/or alcohol use
- *Preventing cancer:* A low-fat diet high in vegetables and fruits along with regular exercise can help reduce your risk of colorectal cancer. Colorectal cancer may be preventable and is easier to treat when detected early.
- *For additional information:* Talk with your healthcare provider about what kind of screening test is right for you, and visit www.colonoscopytoday.com for more information.

ⁱ "What are the key statistics about colorectal cancer?" American Cancer Society. 20 Jul 2013. Web. 18 Sep 2013. <http://www.cancer.org/cancer/colonandrectumcancer/detailedguide/colorectal-cancer-key-statistics>