



Where can I get more information?

If you have any questions about colorectal cancer, genetic resources, or need help finding a place to get a colonoscopy, please call the Huntsman Cancer Learning Center:

You can also find more information online:

Tear here

Talk to your doctor about a colonoscopy.

Together, you can catch polyps early and prevent cancer in the colon or rectum. The American Cancer Society and the National Comprehensive Cancer Network recommend that people with a higher risk of colorectal cancer follow these steps:

- Have your first colonoscopy at age 40 *or* 10 years earlier than the youngest age when a family member was diagnosed (choose the younger age).
- If no polyps are found, repeat the colonoscopy every 3-5 years.
- If polyps are found, your doctor may recommend you get screened more often.

If you do not have a doctor or would like more information about genetic testing or genetic counseling, **call Huntsman Cancer Institute:**



ADDRESS
PHONE

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4/09

Colorectal Cancer Screening Saves Lives



**family
care
project**

Colorectal Cancer Awareness
and Risk Education

HUNTSMAN CANCER INSTITUTE

What is colorectal cancer?

Colorectal cancer is an abnormal growth that occurs in the colon or rectum. The colon is the large intestine or large bowel. The rectum connects the colon to the anus.

Cancer in the colon or rectum usually develops from polyps. Polyps are small growths that are not cancer but may become cancer if not removed.

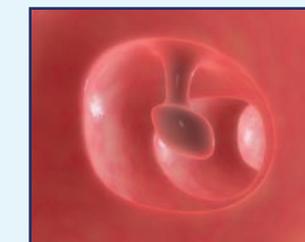
Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States. You can help to protect your health by knowing your risk.



View of the colon and rectum in the human body



View inside a healthy colon



View inside a colon with a polyp



Am I at higher risk of this disease?

Many things add to the risk of cancer in the colon or rectum. A very important risk factor is family history. In fact, having an immediate relative (parent, child, brother, or sister) with colorectal cancer may **double or triple your risk**.

What are the symptoms?

People with polyps or cancer in the colon or rectum usually do not have symptoms. Colorectal cancer can be found early with a screening test. When found early, the chance of being cured is about 92 percent.

Sometimes polyps or cancer in the colon or rectum can cause these symptoms:

- Blood in the stool or in the toilet after you have a bowel movement
- Diarrhea or constipation over a long period
- Pain or cramping in the abdomen
- Changes in the shape or size of your stool
- Sudden or unexplained weight loss

Talk to your doctor if you have any of these symptoms. They may be caused by something other than cancer. The only way to know for sure is to see your doctor.

How can I protect myself?

Beating colorectal cancer depends on catching it early through testing. If you have a family history of colorectal cancer, colonoscopy is your best screening choice because only this test can find and remove polyps to prevent cancer from developing. If you cannot have a colonoscopy, talk to your doctor about having another type of test, such as a fecal occult blood test (FOBT), which is done using a stool sample. An FOBT may help detect colorectal cancer, but it cannot prevent it like a colonoscopy.

The American Cancer Society and the National Comprehensive Cancer Network recommend specific screening steps for people who have an immediate relative who was diagnosed with colorectal cancer (before age 60), or for those with two or more relatives diagnosed at any age (with at least one being an immediate relative). These steps include the following:

- Have your first colonoscopy at age 40 or 10 years earlier than the youngest age when a family member was diagnosed (choose the younger age).
- If no polyps are found, repeat the colonoscopy at least every 3-5 years.
- If polyps are found, your doctor may recommend you get screened more often.

Families who have more than one member with colorectal cancer or people with this cancer under age 50 may have a genetic condition that adds to the risk for cancer. These individuals may need more frequent screening. Genetic testing is helpful for families at this highest risk. **For more information about genetic testing or counseling, call 1-888-424-2100.**



– Cancer Survivor Huntsman
Cancer Institute Patient

“When you hear the word *cancer*, it is a scary thing. But it’s always better to know, because being diagnosed at an early stage is really key, and that leads to a higher chance of survival. Get screenings. Get your colonoscopies.”

How does a colonoscopy work?

Your doctor will give you instructions about what to eat and drink before your exam in order to help clean out your colon. This will make the exam easier.

Right before the exam, your doctor will give you a medication that makes you sleepy and cuts down on discomfort. You may be awake during the exam, but you may not be aware of what is going on or remember the test. Most people don’t feel a thing!

A small, thin tube with a camera at the end is put into the rectum. The doctor looks through the camera to check for polyps or cancer. If your doctor finds a polyp or growth, he or she can remove it and check to see if it is cancer. This process is called a biopsy. These steps often prevent cancer in the colon or rectum before it develops.

How do I get a colonoscopy?

Your doctor can help you find a place to have a colonoscopy in your area. You should share your family history with your doctor and develop a plan to schedule a colonoscopy.

Common reasons for not getting a colonoscopy include no time, cost, and concern about discomfort. Do not let these barriers stand in your way.

- A colonoscopy takes only about 30 minutes. You will need to rest after the exam. You should be able to go back to normal activities the next day.
- Health insurance often pays for colonoscopies.
- Your doctor will give you a medication during the test to help you from feeling pain or discomfort. The process to clean out the colon before the exam may be unpleasant, but most people get through it just fine.

You can talk to your doctor about screening for cancer in the colon or rectum even if your doctor doesn’t bring up the subject. **Take charge of your health and ask about getting a colonoscopy.**

Is there anything else I can do to help prevent colorectal cancer?

Many behaviors add to the risk of cancer in the colon or rectum. You can make changes in your habits to reduce your risk for colorectal cancer.

- Have regular colonoscopies.
- Maintain a healthy body weight.
- Be physically active every day.
- Eat a diet high in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Limit your intake of high fat foods.
- Do not smoke.
- Only consume alcohol in moderation.

Making these changes does not replace the need to get a colonoscopy, but they are helpful ways you can take charge of your own health.

Tear here for reminder card



Talk with your doctor about colon cancer screening. Specifically, talk with your doctor about scheduling a colonoscopy.