

Colorectal Cancer Screening

Colorectal cancer (cancer in the colon or rectum) is a leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States. But it doesn't have to be. When this cancer is found and removed early, the chances of a full recovery are very good. Because colorectal cancer rarely causes symptoms in its early stages, screening for the disease is important. It's even more crucial if you have risk factors for the disease. Learn more about colorectal cancer and its risk factors. Then talk to your doctor about being screened. You could be saving your own life.

Risk Factors for Colorectal Cancer

Your risk of having colorectal cancer increases if you:

- Are 50 years of age or older.
- Have a family history or personal history of colorectal cancer or adenomatous polyps.
- Have a personal history of colorectal polyps, Crohn's disease, or ulcerative colitis.
- Have a family history of multiple concurrent solid-tumor cancers.
- Colorectal polyps

The Colon and Rectum

Waste from food you eat enters the colon from the small intestine. As it travels through the colon, the waste (stool) loses water and becomes more solid. Intestinal muscles push it toward the sigmoid—the last section of the colon. Stool then moves into the rectum, where it's stored until it's ready to leave the body during a bowel movement.

How Cancer Develops

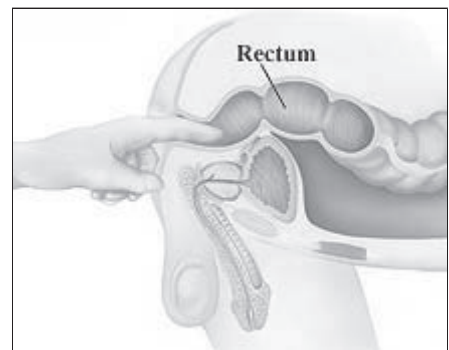
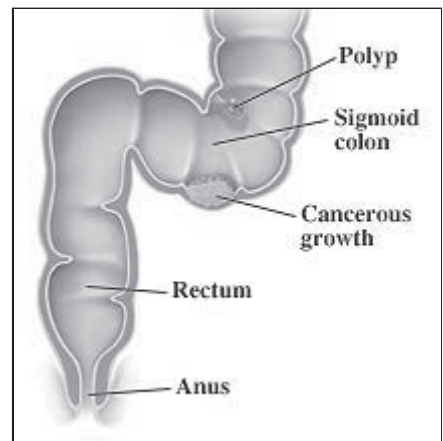
Polyps are growths that form on the lining of the colon or rectum. Most are benign, which means they aren't cancerous. But over time, polyps can become malignant (cancerous). This occurs when cells in these polyps begin growing abnormally. In time, malignant cells invade more and more of the colon and rectum. The cancer may also spread to nearby organs or lymph nodes or to other parts of the body. Finding and removing polyps can help prevent cancer from ever forming.

Your Screening

Screening means looking for a medical problem before you have symptoms. During screening for colorectal cancer, your doctor will ask about your medical history, examine you, and do one or more tests.

History and Exam

- **Medical History:** Your doctor will ask about your medical history. Mention if a family member has had colon cancer or polyps. Also mention any health



A DRE can detect a growth in the rectum or anus.