

Colorectal cancer risk assessment tool

A look at colon and rectal cancer

The colon and rectum form a long, muscular tube called the large intestine, and are part of the body's digestive tract. Cancer that starts in the colon is called colon cancer. Cancer that starts in the rectum is called rectal cancer. Cancer of the colon and rectum is also called colorectal cancer and is caused by uncontrolled cell growth in the tissues of the large intestine.

Cancer cells ignore the messages the body sends that tell normal cells to stop growing. They eventually crowd out and kill healthy cells. Each year, more than 100,000 new cases of colon cancer are diagnosed in the United States, according to the National Cancer Institute.¹

Many risk factors – such as your genes and family history – cannot be controlled. However, a healthy diet and a few lifestyle changes may reduce your overall chance of cancer in general.

Take this quiz to evaluate your risk for colorectal cancer.

Are you at risk for colorectal cancer?

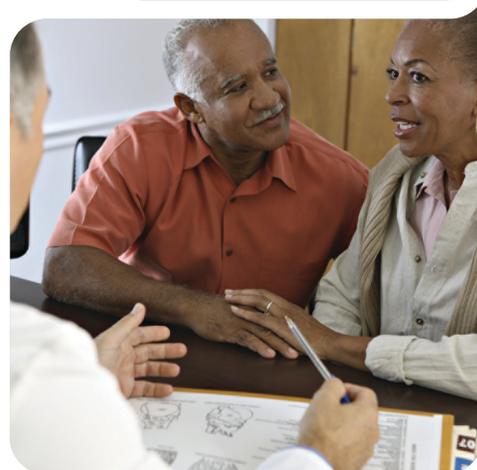
Enter your point value on each line.

1. What is your age?
Less than 50 **0** _____
Age 50 or older **1** _____
2. Have you had a close relative – parent, brother, sister, child – with colon cancer?
Yes **1** No **0** _____
3. Do you have a history of polyps in your colon?:
No **0** _____
Yes **1** _____
Don't know **1** _____
4. Do you have a history of inflammatory bowel disease?
Yes **1** No **0** _____
5. Are you overweight?
Yes **1** No **0** _____
6. Do you smoke or have you ever smoked?
Yes **1** No **0** _____
7. Are you physically inactive?
Yes **1** No **0** _____
8. Do you eat a diet high in red meats, processed meats, and other fats?
Yes **1** No **0** _____
9. Do you eat a diet low in fiber, grains, vegetables and fruits?
Yes **1** No **0** _____
10. Do you drink alcohol?
No **0** _____
Yes, 0-1 drinks per day **0** _____
Yes, 2+ drinks per day **1** _____
11. Do you have Type 2 diabetes?
Yes **1** No **0** _____
12. Have you ever been diagnosed with cancer of the breast, ovary or or uterus?
Yes **1** No **0** _____
13. Are you African-American?
Yes **1** No **0** _____

TOTAL SCORE _____

Add points from questions 1-13

Now, turn the page for your results. →



Be sure to tell your doctor right away:

- If you have changes in your bowel habits, such as more or less frequent than normal bowel movements
- If you have more diarrhea or constipation than usual
- If you see bright red or dark red blood in your stools or black, dark-colored, “tarry” stools
- If your stools are thinner than normal (“pencil stools”), or you’re feeling as if you cannot empty your bowels completely
- If you always seem to feel full or bloated
- If you always seem to have cramps or an upset stomach
- If you have gas pains more often than usual
- If you are losing weight without dieting
- If you feel more tired than usual

See your doctor right away if you have any of these signs. You may not have colorectal cancer. But if there is cancer in your colon or rectum, the earlier your doctor can find and treat it, the better.

Talking to your doctor

Colorectal cancer risk assessment results

The higher your score, or the more times you answered “Yes” to the questions, the greater your risk for developing colorectal cancer.

Regardless of your score, if you are age 50 or older and have not had a colorectal screening, you should talk to your doctor about a colorectal screening test.

Anything that increases your chances of getting a disease is called a risk factor. Having a risk factor does not mean you will get cancer; not having risk factors doesn't mean that you will not get cancer. People who think they may be at risk should discuss this with their doctor. Here are some questions to help you get started:

- Am I at risk?
- Should I get a colorectal cancer screening test?
- What tests are available and how do I prepare for them?
- How can I prevent, or lower my risk of colorectal cancer?
- How do you get colorectal cancer?
- What are the symptoms?
- If diagnosed with colorectal cancer, what are my treatment options

How colorectal cancer starts

Most cancers of the colon and rectum start as polyps, which are small benign growths that can take years to grow. Sometimes they can turn into cancer if they are not removed. Colorectal cancer develops slowly. Very often, people don't feel anything in the early stages of colorectal cancer. That's why it's important to see your doctor for regular checkups.

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This publication offers general health-related information and is not a substitute for professional healthcare. For individualized medical guidance, talk to your doctor.

Diagnosing colorectal cancer:

The American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy considers the colonoscopy the gold standard for finding cancer and precancerous cells in the colon. To prepare you for your test, you'll be given medications for clearing your colon of stool to ensure a good screening. Before a colonoscopy, your doctor will give you medicine to help you relax; then you'll lie on your side or back. Your doctor will put a thin, flexible, lighted tube called a colonoscope into your rectum and colon, which allows your doctor to examine the entire inner lining of your large intestine. If the doctor finds any irregularities, such as ulcers, tumors, or polyps, he or she can take samples or even remove them.

According to the Colon Cancer Alliance, in-home tests can be performed in the comfort of your own home. These include:

- Fecal occult blood test (FOBT) detects small amounts of blood through a stool sample. This test requires a special diet the day before.
- Fecal immunochemical test (FIT) also detects small amounts of blood through a stool sample, but does not require a special diet.
- sDNA (cologuard) detects DNA in a stool sample which may indicate precancerous or cancerous cells as well as blood.

Schedule your screening today!

Remember, the sooner cancer is detected, the easier it is to treat and the more likely that treatments will be successful.

Sources: National Cancer Institute www.cancer.gov/types/colorectal
Colon Cancer Alliance www.ccalliance.org/get-screened/screening-methods/
¹SEER Cancer Statistics Factsheets: Colon and Rectum Cancer. National Cancer Institute. Bethesda, MD, <http://seer.cancer.gov/statfacts/html/colorect.html>

