

Stay informed, stay healthy: Colorectal Cancer Awareness



What is Colorectal Cancer?

Colorectal cancer is a disease in which cells in the colon or rectum grow abnormally. Sometimes it is called colon cancer, for short. The colon is the large intestine or large bowel. The rectum is the passageway that connects the colon to the anus.

In the UAE, colorectal cancer is the most common cancer among males and the third most common cancer in females. It is a leading cause of cancer deaths. Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer type worldwide and is the second most common cause of cancer death, leading to almost 1 million deaths per year.

Risk Factors of Colon-Rectal Cancer:

- Inflammatory bowel disease (Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis).
- A personal or family history of colorectal cancer or colorectal polyps.
- Genetic predisposition (An increased chance or likelihood of developing a particular disease based on the presence of one or more genetic variants and/or a family history).
- Lifestyle factors that may contribute to an increased risk of colorectal cancer such as:
 - ↳ Lack of regular physical activity.
 - ↳ Overweight and obesity.
 - ↳ A low-fiber and high-fat diet, or a diet high in processed meats.
 - ↳ A diet low in fruit and vegetables.
 - ↳ Alcohol consumption.
 - ↳ Tobacco use.





Modifiable Risk Factors:

1. **A sedentary lifestyle & Obesity:** If your job requires a lot of sitting (at your desk and in meetings), make it a point to get up at least once an hour and move for ten minutes. Walk around your floor, the building, a flight of stairs. Take it slow if you don't have a regular exercise routine, then see if you can walk a little faster or farther. A general recommendation for healthy, moderate exercise is at least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise each day, at least five days a week. If can't fit in 30 minutes at one time? Three 10-minute blocks of exercise over the course of the day are just as good.
2. **Healthy Dietary Habits:**
 - a. WHO International Agency for Research on Cancer released a report that recommends reduced consumption of red meat and processed meat (salted, cured, fermented, or smoked to enhance flavor or improve the preservation of the meat). Research also indicates that a healthy diet can prevent up to 70 to 90 percent of colorectal cancers. Given that statistic, you should take these food tips very seriously
 - i. Limit red meat to less than 18 ounces per week; eliminate processed meats like bacon, sausage and hot dogs (both the content and preparation of these foods may contribute to colon cancer).
 - ii. Choose unsaturated fats instead of the saturated fats typically found in animal foods like red meat and butter.
 - iii. Try to include more food that contains omega-3 fatty acids, like wild salmon (as opposed to farm-raised salmon), milled flaxseed, walnuts, and plant-based oils, such as olive and canola oils.
 - iv. Choose yellow and orange vegetables like carrots, sweet potatoes, pumpkin and summer squash, which are high in beta-carotene. Eat a good variety of fruit daily.
 - v. Eat more fiber-rich foods (they may not directly lower your risk of colon cancer, but they can help curb your appetite, so you don't overeat).
3. **Limit your alcohol intake.** Alcohol may be smooth going down, but once it's in your digestive tract and liver it's an irritant to cells. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics recommends one glass of beer or wine per day and two glasses for men maximum.
4. **Quit Smoking.**

What are the Symptoms:

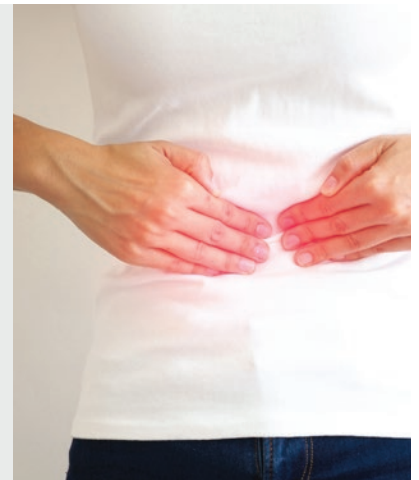
- Change in bowel habits
- Change in color or shape of stool
- Rectal bleeding or blood in stool
- Stomach discomfort or cramping
- Fatigue or weakness
- Unexplained weight loss
- Anemia

Note: These are indicative symptoms there is possibility of no symptoms at all, remember every patient is different.

Early Detection & Screening:

A screening test is used to look for a disease when there are no symptoms present. Regular screening, beginning at age 45, is the key to preventing colorectal cancer and finding it early.

e.g., Colorectal cancer almost always develops from precancerous polyps (abnormal growths) in the colon or rectum. Screening tests can find precancerous polyps, so that they can be removed before they turn into cancer. Screening tests can also find colorectal cancer early when treatment works best.



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