

Colorectal Cancer

Colorectal cancer is a cancer of the digestive (or gastrointestinal) system. It starts when a polyp (a tissue growth) develops in the large intestine. Over time, this polyp may become cancerous and grow outward through the layers of tissue. Risk factors for colorectal cancer include:

- ▶ Being age 50 or older
- ▶ A history of polyps in the colon or rectum
- ▶ A history of bowel disease (such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis)
- ▶ A family history of colorectal cancer
- ▶ A high-fat, low-fiber diet
- ▶ Obesity or an inactive lifestyle
- ▶ Tobacco use
- ▶ Heavy use of alcohol
- ▶ A history of diabetes
- ▶ Previous radiation treatments for cancer that were directed at the abdominal area

Screening for colorectal cancer usually begins at age 50, although a doctor may recommend it an earlier age for those who are at high risk due to family history or another medical condition. In addition, a doctor may recommend testing for symptoms that could be of concern, such as:

- ▶ Bleeding from the rectum or blood in the stool
- ▶ Frequent diarrhea or constipation
- ▶ Unexplained weight loss

Active steps you can take to minimize lifestyle risks related to colon cancer include:

- ▶ Eating a low-fat, high-fiber diet that includes five or more servings of fruits and vegetables and three or more servings of whole grains a day
- ▶ Quitting smoking and drinking in moderation (no more than one drink a day for women, two drinks a day for men)
- ▶ Exercising 30 minutes a day at least five times a week

If you or someone you love is struggling with cancer or another health condition, LifeMatters can help. Call 24/7/365.



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