

# COLORECTAL CANCER FAQS:

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## What is Colorectal Cancer?

Cancer is a disease in which cells in the body grow out of control. Colorectal cancer is cancer that occurs in the colon or rectum. The colon is the large intestine or large bowel. The rectum is the passageway that connects the colon to the anus.

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## What Are the Symptoms of Colorectal Cancer?

Someone could have colorectal cancer and not know it. People do not always have symptoms, especially at first (or in early stages). If there are symptoms, they may include:

- Changes in your bowel habits
- Blood in your stool (bowel movement).
- Abdominal pain, aches, or cramps that don't go away.
- Unexplained weight loss

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## Who gets Colorectal Cancer?

Colorectal cancer occurs most often in men and women who are 45 years old or older, and the risk increases with age.

### You may be at increased risk if:

- You or a close relative have had colorectal polyps or colorectal cancer.
- You have inflammatory bowel disease, Crohn's disease, or Ulcerative colitis.
- You have a genetic syndrome such as familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP) or hereditary non-polyposis colorectal cancer (Lynch Syndrome)

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## Why is Screening Important?

Colorectal cancer usually starts from precancerous polyps in the colon or rectum. A polyp is a growth that shouldn't be there.



Over time, some polyps can turn into cancer. Screening tests can find precancerous polyps, so 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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### What are the types of screening tests?

#### 👁️ Stool Tests:

- **Guaiac-based Fecal Occult Blood Test (gFOBT)** uses the chemical guaiac to detect blood in stool. At home, you use a stick or brush to obtain a small amount of stool. You return the test to the health care provider or a lab, where stool samples are checked for blood.
- **Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT)** uses antibodies to detect blood in the stool. You receive a test kit from your health care provider. This test is done the same way as the gFOBT.
- **FIT-DNA Test (or Stool DNA Test)** combines the FIT with a test to detect altered DNA in stool. You collect an entire bowel movement and send it to a lab to be checked for cancer cells.

#### 👁️ Flexible Sigmoidoscopy (Flex Sig)

The health care provider puts a short, thin, flexible, lighted tube into your rectum and checks for polyps or cancer inside the rectum and lower third of the colon.

#### 👁️ Colonoscopy ★

Similar to flexible sigmoidoscopy, except the health care provider uses a stronger, thin, flexible, lighted tube to check for polyps or cancer inside the rectum and the entire colon. During the test, the health care provider can find and remove most polyps and some cancers. Colonoscopy may also be used as a follow-up test if one of the other screening tests finds anything unusual.

#### 👁️ CT Colonography (Virtual Colonoscopy) ★

Computed tomography (CT) colonography, also called a virtual colonoscopy, uses X-rays and computers to produce images of the entire colon. The images are displayed on a computer screen for the health care provider to analyze.

# TRUE OR FALSE

**COLORECTAL  
CANCER IS THE  
2ND LEADING  
CANCER KILLER.**

**TRUE**

**FALSE**

**BOTH MEN AND  
WOMEN GET  
COLORECTAL  
CANCER.**

**TRUE**

**FALSE**

**COLORECTAL  
CANCER OFTEN  
STARTS WITH NO  
SYMPTOMS.**

**TRUE**

**FALSE**

**YOU CAN STOP THIS  
CANCER BEFORE IT  
STARTS.**

**TRUE**

**FALSE**

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