



# Proactive Changes Can Lower Your Colorectal Cancer Risk

Screening is an important step to prevent colorectal cancer, but it's not the only one. Learn what factors in your life you can and cannot change, set realistic goals and hold yourself accountable in the name of your health.

## Risk Factors You CAN Change

There are some factors that increase your risk of colorectal cancer that you can control by choosing to live healthier.



Real weight loss: 85 pounds

### Your weight

Lose weight and become physically active. Create a plan to help keep you on task.

### Poor diet

Reduce the amount of red meat (beef, pork, lamb or liver) and processed meats you eat.

### Smoking

Stop smoking with the help of The American Cancer Society's [guide](#). Smoking is linked to many types of cancers.

### Heavy alcohol use

Limit your alcohol intake, as alcohol use has been linked with a higher risk of cancers of the colon and rectum. The American Cancer Society recommends that men limit their intake to two drinks per day and women to one drink per day.

# Risk Factors You **CAN'T** Change



## **Age**

Your risk of colorectal cancer goes up as you age. Younger adults are susceptible, but it's much more common after age 50.

## **Racial and ethnic background**

African Americans have the highest colorectal cancer incidence and mortality rates in the United States. Jews of Eastern European descent have one of the highest colorectal cancer risks of any ethnic group in the world.

## **Personal or family history of colorectal polyps, adenomatous polyps, colorectal cancer, or inflammatory bowel disease**

Talk with your doctor about beginning screening at an earlier age.

## **Inherited syndrome**

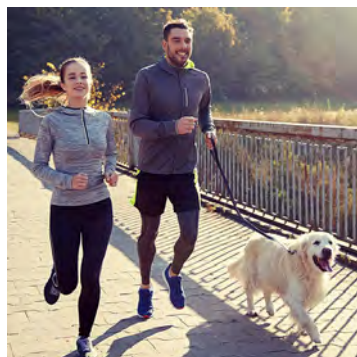
About five percent of people who develop colorectal cancer have inherited gene mutations that cause family cancer syndrome. The most common inherited syndromes linked with colorectal cancers are Lynch syndrome and familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP).

## **Type 2 diabetes**

Both type 2 diabetes and colorectal cancer share some of the same risk factors, like being overweight.

# Lower Your Risk for Colorectal Cancer

Living a healthy lifestyle can have a significant effect on your health, including reducing your risk of colon cancer. If you are at risk, be sure to eat healthy and get exercise.



## Eat Well.

### More veggies & fruits

- Diets high in vegetables, fruits and other plant foods reduce risk for many diseases, including colorectal cancer. Depending on your age and sex, federal guidelines recommend that adults eat at least 1½ to 2 cups per day of fruit and 2 to 3 cups per day of vegetables.
- Fruits and vegetables are rich in dietary fiber and nutrients and are good sources of substances called phytochemicals, which help protect cells in the body from damage that can lead to cancer.
- Plant foods can also help you maintain a healthy weight, which is a key factor in helping reduce your colorectal cancer risk.

### Reduce red meats

- The American Institute for Cancer Research recommends for cancer prevention that adults eat no more than moderate amounts of red meat, such as beef, pork and lamb, and eat little, if any, processed meat.
- There is strong evidence that consumption of red or processed meat are both causes of colorectal cancer.
- Keep your red meat intake to 12 to 18 ounces per week or less.

### Avoid alcohol & smoking

- Colon cancer has been linked to heavy drinking. The American Cancer Society recommends no more than two drinks a day for men and one drink a day for women.
- Smoking is often associated with lung cancer, but has been linked to many types of cancer. Long-term smokers are more likely than non-smokers to develop and die from colon cancer. The longer a person smokes, the greater the risk.

## Be Active.



## Move more

- Increasing your physical activity can reduce your risk of developing colorectal cancer by 30 to 40 percent.
- It's estimated that 30 to 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day is needed to protect against colorectal cancer. ***If you currently exercise for 30 minutes for three to four days per week, consider increasing it to 40 minutes. If you are just starting your exercise regimen, start slow and work your way up to 30 minutes for three days per week.***
- Exercise also helps you to maintain a healthy body weight. Studies show that people who are overweight or obese are more likely to develop colon polyps, a possible precursor to cancer. Higher weights are associated with higher polyp risk.

## Monitor your symptoms

Finding and treating colorectal cancer early before it advances can prevent death from colorectal cancer. Talk to your doctor if you are experiencing any colorectal cancer symptoms:

- Rectal bleeding
- Dark or black stool
- Change in bowel habits
- Diarrhea and/or constipation
- Narrowing of stool
- Persistent abdominal discomfort (cramps, gas, pain or feeling bloated)
- Anemia
- Unexplained weight loss
- Weakness or fatigue
- Nausea or vomiting

Sources: American Cancer Society, Colorectal Cancer Alliance, National Cancer Institute