

You FIRST

Your Month of Well-being

March 2024

Colorectal Cancer: Screening Saves Lives

In March, we recognize National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month to shed light on the fourth most common type of cancer in the United States. Also known as *colon cancer*, this is a disease in which cells in the colon or rectum grow out of control, sometimes causing abnormal growths called polyps to form in either location. Overtime, some polyps have the potential to turn into cancer.¹ The good news is screening tests can detect polyps so they can be removed prior to turning into cancer. Screening also helps find colorectal cancer early when treatment works best.¹ Early detection is truly key in the fight against this disease.

Risk Factors^{1, 3}

- Risk for colorectal cancer **increases as you age**. While younger adults can get it, this disease is much more common in those 50 years of age and older.
- If you have a **personal or family history** of colorectal polyps or colorectal cancer, your risk is higher.
- A personal history of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), such as **Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis**, increases risk of colorectal cancer.
- Approximately 5% of those who develop colorectal cancer have **inherited gene mutations**, such as Lynch syndrome and familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP).
- Lifestyle factors that may contribute to an increased risk include lack of physical activity, a diet low in fiber, fruits and vegetables, a diet high in fat and processed meats, obesity, alcohol consumption, and tobacco use.

Screening Basics

- It is recommended that adults ages 45 to 75 be screened for colorectal cancer. For those older than 75, talk to your doctor about screening recommendations. Those at an increased risk should also talk to their doctor about when to begin screening, how often, and which test is right for them.¹
- Several screening tests can be used to detect polyps or colorectal cancer such as stool tests, flexible sigmoidoscopy, colonoscopy, and CT Colonography (virtual colonoscopy).
- Each test has advantages and disadvantages. Which test to use depends on your preferences, medical conditions, personal or family history, probability of having genetic syndrome, as well as the likelihood of you getting tested, and resources available for testing and follow-up. Be sure to talk to your doctor about the pros and cons of each.
- Don't be fooled by colon misinformation. Get the facts. Test your knowledge about colorectal cancer with six questions [here!](#)

Sources: ¹ [Colorectal \(Colon\) Cancer | CDC](#)

² [Six Ways to Lower Your Risk for Colon Cancer](#)

³ [Colorectal Cancer Risk Factors | Hereditary Colorectal Risk Factors](#)

Protect Your Colorectal Health with These Tips!²

- **Eat lots of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains.** Diets that include vegetables, fruits, and whole grains can help reduce the risk of colon or rectal cancer. Alternatively, limit the intake of processed meats, as these have been linked to an increased risk of colorectal cancer.
- **Stay physically active.** Those who do not get regular exercise may have a greater chance of developing colorectal cancer. Being more active may help lower your risk.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight includes several factors including healthy eating, physical activity, getting optimal sleep, and reducing stress. Being overweight or obese increases your risk of getting colorectal cancer.
- **Avoid alcohol and tobacco.** Alcohol and tobacco use are important preventable risk factors for cancer. It is best not to drink alcohol at all, but if you do, the American Cancer Society recommends no more than two drinks a day for men and one drink a day for women.

Wellness Wednesday Webinars!

Join the CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield Wellness and Disease Management team once a month on Wednesdays to learn more about that monthly health observance and how you can prioritize your health and wellbeing!

March 6, 2024- Colorectal Cancer: Early Detection Saves Lives

An educational webinar that will shed light on colorectal cancer, risk factors, early detection methods, and the importance of raising awareness about this condition. Knowledge is a powerful tool in the fight against colorectal cancer. Presented by Dr. Jenny Moy, Medical Director.

[Click here](#) or scan the QR code to register!



CareFirst WellBeingSM Resources

- **Craving to Quit:** Quitting tobacco can lower your risk for many health conditions including heart disease. Our program's expert guidance, support and online tools make quitting easier than you might think!
- **One-on-One Health Coaching:** As part of your CareFirst WellBeing program, you can participate in personal health coaching. Your health coach will work with you and provide the support, guidance, and encouragement you need to see real results!
- **Health Topics:** Check out Health Topics within CareFirst WellBeing to get up to date information on colorectal cancer. (*sign up or log in, click Discover, then Health Topics and select Colorectal Cancer*)

Blue365 Featured Deal for March

One great way to **Achieve a Healthier You** is to take advantage of the Blue365 Health and Wellness discount program provided to insured CareFirst members (includes those with medical, dental, vision and disability).

Access up to 13,000+ gyms with packages starting at just \$19 per month!

Fitness Your Way[®] allows Blue365 members to select a package that fits your budget and wellness goals. Click [here](#) for more information!

Sources: ¹ [Colorectal \(Colon\) Cancer | CDC](#)

² [Six Ways to Lower Your Risk for Colon Cancer](#)

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Wear Red
Day
2024

When we take care
of our hearts as
part of our self-
care, we set an
example for others.