

## AGA Patient Education Section

### Colorectal Cancer

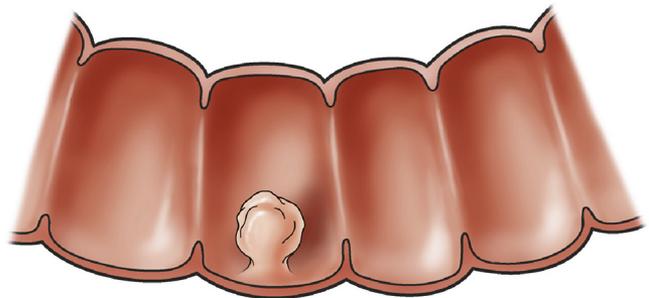
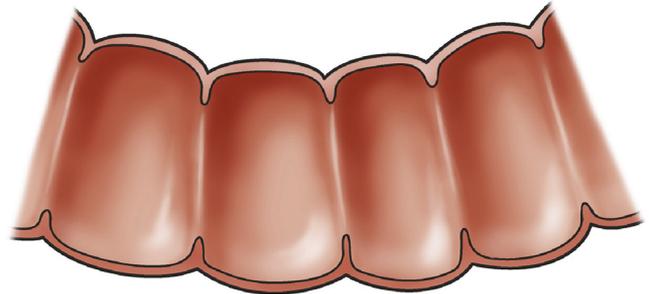
Colorectal cancer, also known as colon cancer, is when there is a growth in the lining of the colon or rectum that becomes cancerous. Most colorectal cancers come from precancerous polyps.

A polyp is a flat, mushroom-like growth that slowly grows on the inside wall of the colon or rectum. Not all polyps turn into cancer, but precancerous polyps could become a cancer after 5 or 10 years.

#### Symptoms

Many people with colorectal cancer do not have any symptoms at first, but over time there are warning signs. If you are having any of the symptoms listed, talk to your doctor right away.

- Rectal bleeding.
- Blood in your stool.
- Frequent cramping pain in your lower belly.
- Pain during a bowel movement or the urge to move your bowels without having a bowel movement.
- Change in your bowel movements, especially in shape of the stool.



Colon with polyp

#### Who Is At Risk for Colorectal Cancer?

Colorectal cancer is the third-most common cause of cancer in both men and women as of 2015. Anyone age 50 or older should get screened. Some people are at a greater risk for colorectal cancer, especially if they have one of these risk factors:

- Have had colorectal cancer or precancerous polyps before.
- Have a parent, sibling, or child who has had colorectal cancer or polyps, or have family members who have had cancer in the uterus, ovary, or other organs.
- Have Lynch syndrome.
- Have inflammatory bowel disease, such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis.
- Have a syndrome, such as familial adenomatous polyposis, which leads to many polyps in the colon or rectum.

#### Getting Tested

Colorectal cancer screening is safe and effective. Routine screenings can find cancerous growths and remove them. There are many choices of screening tests, so talk to your gastroenterologist about which test is best for you.

A colonoscopy is the only method that blends both testing and prevention. If your doctor sees any polyps, he or she will

remove them right away, during the procedure. Other choices are as follows:

- Fecal immunochemical test.
- Fecal occult blood test.
- Cologuard test.

These may call for further testing, such as a colonoscopy, if abnormalities are found.

#### Prevention

Besides getting tested regularly, there are many healthy lifestyle choices that can lower your risk of colorectal cancer. Try to:

- Avoid smoking and limit alcohol intake.
- Eat foods that are high in fiber, such as whole grains and fruits, and eat cruciferous vegetables, such as cabbage, broccoli, and cauliflower.
- Increase your calcium intake.
- Cut the amount of fats, oils, butter, red meat, and charcoal-broiled and salt-cured foods you eat.
- Exercise regularly and keep up a healthy weight.

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For more information on colorectal cancer and testing, talk to your gastroenterologist and visit [www.gastro.org/CRC](http://www.gastro.org/CRC)