

The large intestine is the portion of the digestive system most responsible for absorption of water from the indigestible residue of food. The ileocecal valve of the ileum (small intestine) passes material into the large intestine at the cecum. Material passes through the ascending, transverse, descending and sigmoid portions of the colon, and finally into the rectum. From the rectum, the waste is expelled from the body.

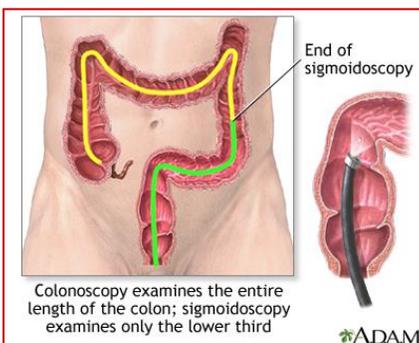
## Colon-Rectal Cancer (Colorectal Cancer)

The colon and rectum are part of the large intestine. Cancers of the colon and rectum are often referred to together, as colorectal cancer, occurs when tumors form in the lining of the large intestine. It is common in both men and women. Symptoms of colorectal cancer include

- Diarrhea or constipation
- A feeling that your bowel does not empty completely
- Blood (either bright red or very dark) in your stool
- Stools that are narrower than usual
- Frequent gas pains or cramps, or feeling full or bloated
- Weight loss with no known reason
- Fatigue
- Nausea or vomiting

In the United States, colorectal cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer death. More than 50,000 people die every year. Good news, when detected early, **colorectal cancer is often curable**. When pre-cancerous growths or polyps are detected and removed through screening, **colorectal cancer can often be prevented**. You're also more likely to get it if you have colorectal polyps a family history of colorectal cancer, ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease, eat a diet high in fat, or smoke. Colorectal cancer occurs most commonly in men and women age 50 and older; however, younger people can also develop this disease. **Screening for colorectal cancer is recommended for men and women beginning at age 50**. Those with certain risk factors—such as a family history of colorectal polyps or cancer—need to talk with their doctor about getting screened at a younger age.

Because you may not have symptoms at first, it's important to have screening tests. **Everyone over 50 should get screened. Tests include tests for blood in the stool and colonoscopy**. Treatments for colorectal cancer include surgery, chemotherapy, radiation, or a combination. Surgery can usually cure it when it is found early.



There are 4 basic tests for colon cancer: a stool test (to check for blood); sigmoidoscopy (inspection of the lower colon; colonoscopy (inspection of the entire colon); and double contrast barium enema. All 4 are effective in catching cancers in the early stages, when treatment is most beneficial.

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/colorectalcancer.html>

**Regular screening, using high-sensitivity fecal occult blood testing, sigmoidoscopy, or colonoscopy beginning at age 50 years and continuing until age 75**