

Understanding Colon Cancer

Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer affecting both men and women in the US.

1 Introduction

Colon cancer, also referred to as colorectal cancer, is a type of cancer that begins in the colon, affecting men and women equally. This type of cancer can happen at any age, though it tends to affect older adults. The first stages normally start with small, noncancerous clumps of cells, called polyps, which form outside the colon. Over time, some of the polyps can become cancerous.

2 Symptoms

Colon cancer may not cause noticeable symptoms in the early stages. As the disease progresses, some symptoms patients experience are:

- A persistent change in bowel movement, like constipation or diarrhea
- Rectal bleeding or blood in stool
- A feeling that your bowel doesn't empty
- Abdominal pain or cramping
- Weakness or fatigue
- Vomiting

3 Risk Factors

Factors that may increase a person's risk of colon cancer include:

- Older age (older than 50)
- Inflammatory intestinal conditions
- Inherited syndromes that increase colon cancer risk
- Low fiber, high fat diet
- A sedentary lifestyle
- Being overweight or obese
- Diabetes
- Smoking
- Alcohol

4 Treatments

Treatment for colon cancer can differ based on the stage. Polyps can be removed during a colonoscopy during the early stages. However, most treatments often involve surgery to remove the cancerous tissues and surrounding lymph nodes. Surgical treatment may be combined with chemotherapy and radiation therapy to help shrink tumors and destroy cancer cells that remain after surgery.

Since early detection can increase the chances of surviving, it's recommended that men and women begin screening for colon cancer at age 45.

Did you know?

Patients ages 66 or younger account for nearly half of all new colorectal cancer diagnoses.

For more information on Colon Cancer and supportive resources, please visit [mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org)

References:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/colon-cancer/symptoms-causes/syc-20353669>

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