

For more information
about colorectal cancer:

The American Cancer Society
www.cancer.org
1-800-ACS-2345

American Gastroenterological Association
www.gastro.org
1-301-654-2055

Colon Cancer Alliance
www.ccalliance.org
1-877-422-2030

National Cancer Institute
www.cancer.gov
1-800-4-CANCER



Colorectal Cancer: Are you at risk?

*Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama
cares about your health and wellness.*

*This is an informational series designed to provide
specific ideas for a healthy and safe lifestyle.*

AlabamaBlue.com/myBlueWellness

*Colorectal cancer is cancer
that starts in either the colon
or rectum. It may take years
to develop and usually begins
as a polyp—a growth of tissue
in the center of the colon or
rectum. Removing the polyp
early may prevent it from
becoming cancerous.*



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This information is provided for general informational purposes. Information contained in this communication is not intended to replace professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified healthcare provider regarding your healthcare needs. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay seeking medical advice because of something you have read in this informational piece. Always check your benefits for coverage information and limitations.



myBlueWellness
*A wellness program for you
from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama*

More than 136,000 people will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer this year. Of cancers that affect both men and women, colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States and the third most common cancer in men and in women.

Risk Factors

Colorectal cancer affects men and women of all racial and ethnic groups. Your risk of getting colorectal cancer increases as you get older. More than 90% of cases occur in people who are 50 years old or older.

Other risk factors include:

- A personal or family history of the disease, polyps or bowel disease
- Smoking
- Diabetes
- Alcohol consumption
- Obesity
- Lack of exercise
- A high-fat and low-fiber diet

Prevention

It is not yet clear what causes colorectal cancer. Lower your risk by eating plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole-grain foods while limiting high-fat foods, as well as exercising at least 30 minutes a day, five days a week.



Early Detection

Several methods exist for detecting colorectal cancer early. Beginning at age 45, your doctor may suggest one or more of the following screenings:

Tests for Colorectal Polyps and Cancer

- Fecal occult blood test (FOBT)—every year
- Fecal immunochemical test (FIT)—every year
- Flexible sigmoidoscopy—every three years
- Colonoscopy—If normal, repeat every ten years
- CT colonography (virtual colonoscopy) — every five years
- Double-contrast barium enema (DCBE)—If normal, repeat every five years
- Stool DNA test—every three years

People at higher risk should begin screenings before age 45. Be sure to check your health plan benefits to see what tests are covered and at what age.

Warning Signs and Symptoms

Colon cancer usually doesn't have any symptoms in the early stages. That is why it is important to get screened appropriately. If you experience any of the following, you should see your doctor immediately:

- Rectal bleeding
- Blood in the stool
- Changes in bowel habits
- Lower abdominal cramping

Treatment

Surgery is the most common form of treatment and the most successful — if performed before the cancer spreads. Chemotherapy, and possibly radiation, may be given to patients whose cancer has spread to other areas.