

Colorectal cancer - screening saves lives

Colorectal cancer, also called colon cancer, is the fourth most common cancer in the United States. It is the second leading cause of death from cancer. Colorectal cancer affects all racial and ethnic groups and is most often found in people ages 50 and older.

The best way to detect colorectal cancer is to get screened regularly starting at age 50. When caught early, colon cancer can be treated and cured. There are often no signs or symptoms of early colorectal cancer – that’s why it’s so important to get screened. You may also be at higher risk if you are African American, smoke, or have a family history of colorectal cancer.

Everyone can take these healthy steps to help prevent colorectal cancer:

- Get screened starting at age 50.
- Quit smoking and avoid secondhand smoke.
- Get plenty of physical activity and eat healthy.



A new alternative to colonoscopy?

Many people delay or avoid a life-saving colonoscopy because they are nervous about the procedure, or don’t want to do the necessary prep of cleansing the colon. A new test, approved in 2014, may be an option for some lower-risk individuals.

A stool DNA test, which can be done at home and mailed to a lab, may detect certain changes that are found in cancer cells. There’s no special diet, laxatives or enemas required. For those

who have been putting off colon cancer screening, the DNA test may be a good place to start.

If the DNA test shows possible cancer, however, a colonoscopy would most likely need to be done. Before choosing a colorectal cancer test, be sure to talk with your doctor about his or her recommendation. You may also need to contact your insurance company to find out which screening tests are covered.

Colorectal cancer screening saves lives. If everyone age 50 and older had their screening tests done as recommended, up to 60 percent of all colorectal cancer deaths could be avoided. Though no one looks forward to a colonoscopy, it’s worth the inconvenience. It could save your life!

Source: American Cancer Society, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention