

American Cancer Society Circle Of LifeSM : *Cancer Education and Wellness*



Photo courtesy of Kisa Joy Erickson

Colorectal Cancer Fact Sheet

About the Colon and Rectum

- The colon and rectum are part of the digestive system that processes food.

What is colorectal cancer?

- Colorectal cancer is cancer that starts in either the colon or the rectum.
- Signs and symptoms of colorectal cancer:
 - » A change in bowel habits, such as diarrhea, constipation, or narrowing of the stool, that lasts for more than a few days
 - » A feeling that you need to have a bowel movement that is not relieved by doing so
 - » Rectal bleeding, black stools, or blood in the stool
 - » Cramping or belly pain
 - » Weakness, fatigue, weight loss when you aren't trying to lose weight

The Bottom Line about Colorectal Cancer

Regular testing starting at age 45 can help prevent some colorectal cancers and find other colorectal cancers early. Finding colorectal cancer early increases the chances of successful treatment.

Several types of tests can be used. Talk to your health care provider about which ones might be good options for you. No matter which test you choose, the most important thing is to get tested.

- Eating plenty of vegetables and fruits
- Limiting the amount of processed and red meat you eat
- Avoiding tobacco
- Limiting how much alcohol you drink
- Increasing your level of physical activity

If you would like more information about colorectal cancer, please visit [cancer.org](https://www.cancer.org) or call **1-800-227-2345**.

