

American Cancer Society Circle Of LifeSM : Cancer Education and Wellness

Colorectal Cancer Fact Sheet



Photo courtesy of Kisa Joy Erickson

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 50 can help prevent some colorectal cancers and find other colorectal cancers early. Finding colorectal cancer early increases the chances of successful treatment.

So, ask your health care provider what test is best for you and how often you should be tested. You can also help yourself stay healthy by:

- Eating plenty of vegetables and fruits
- Limiting the amount of processed and red meat you eat
- Avoiding commercial 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 or call 1-800-227-2345.

