

Colorectal Cancer Talking Points

- Colorectal cancer is the 2nd leading cause of cancer death worldwide; however, it is also one of the most preventable of all cancers.
- While typically affecting older adults, colon cancer can occur at any age. As the rate of colorectal cancer has recently increased among younger individuals, preventive screening for those at average risk is now recommended beginning at age 45.
- Many people with colon cancer experience no symptoms during the early stages of the disease.
- Risk factors you cannot control include older age (50+), African-American race, family/personal history of colon cancer or polyps, inflammatory intestinal conditions (e.g., UC, Crohn's), and certain inherited syndromes (i.e., FAP and Lynch syndrome).
- Risk factors you can control include poor diet (low fiber/high fat), sedentary lifestyle, diabetes, obesity, smoking, and alcohol use.
- The disease usually begins as small polyps that form on the inside of the colon that over time can become colon cancer.
- A colonoscopy is the most sensitive test currently available for colon cancer screening; a long, flexible tube (colonoscope) is inserted into the rectum, and a tiny video camera at the tip of the tube allows the doctor to detect changes or abnormalities inside the entire colon.
- A colonoscopy takes about 30 to 60 minutes, and screening is generally repeated every 10 years if no abnormalities are found and you don't have an increased risk of colon cancer. If polyps are found, they can be removed through the scope and biopsied right after the exam.
- The sooner you begin screening, the more likely to identify colon cancer at an early stage when it is most treatable and survival rate is highest.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about the best screening option and timing for you!