

## Online Resources

[www.americancancer.org](http://www.americancancer.org)

<http://fightcolorectalcancer.org>

[www.cdc.gov/screenforlife](http://www.cdc.gov/screenforlife)

[www.ccalliance.org](http://www.ccalliance.org)

[www.tacklecoloncancer.org](http://www.tacklecoloncancer.org)



Inova Health System has an online video to help you learn more about colon cancer. **Click here to watch the video:**  
<http://www.inova.org/HealthLibrary/GetHealthTopic.aspx?id=53&id=1&ContentTypeID=109&ContentID=V1051&pTitle=videosdet>

Edited by Genea Luck, Congregational Health Partnership.

Articles in this newsletter are not a substitute for the care and advice of medical professionals. When you have a question or need medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, consult your physician.

This newsletter is produced by Inova Health System in conjunction with your faith community. If you prefer not to receive this newsletter, please notify the appropriate personnel in your faith community.

Inova Health System is a not-for-profit healthcare system based in Northern Virginia that consists of hospitals and other health services, including emergency- and urgent-care centers, home care, nursing homes, mental health and blood donor services, and wellness classes. Governed by a voluntary board of community members, Inova's mission is to improve the health of the diverse community it serves through excellence in patient care, education and research.

Inova provides a healthy environment for its patients, families, visitors, staff and physicians by prohibiting tobacco use on its campuses.

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## For Your Health

### Preventing Colon Cancer

Colorectal cancer (cancer of the colon and rectum) is the second leading cancer killer in the United States.

According to the American Cancer Society, in 2009, there were 106,100 new cases of colon cancer (52,010 of these cases were in men, while 54,090 of these cases were in women.)

Colorectal cancer usually starts from polyps in the colon or rectum. A polyp is a growth that shouldn't be there. Over time, some polyps can turn into cancer.

It is very important to get screened early and take measures to control cancer growths early. Cancers are capable of spreading through the body by two mechanism called invasion and metastasis.

Invasion refers to the direct migration and penetration by cancer cells into neighboring tissues. Metastasis refers to the ability of cancer cells to penetrate into lymphatic and blood vessels, circulate through the bloodstream, and then invade normal tissue elsewhere in body.

Cancer is often perceived as a disease that strikes for no apparent reason. This is because scientists don't know all the reasons.

However, there are many scientific studies that point to the existence of three main reasons that contribute to the development of cancer:

- chemicals (e.g. from smoking or diet),
- radiation,
- viruses or bacteria.



## Signs and Symptoms

It is best to get tested by your doctor if you experience any of these common Colon Cancer signs and symptoms:

- A change in bowel habits,
- Diarrhea, constipation or feeling that the bowel does not empty completely,
- Blood in the stool and stools that are narrower than usual,
- General abdominal discomfort (frequent gas pains, bloating, fullness, and or/cramps)
- Weight loss with no known reason,
- Constant tiredness
- Vomiting

## Are You At High Risk?

Your risk for colorectal cancer may be higher than average if:

- You or a close relative have had colorectal polyps or colorectal cancer.
- You have inflammatory bowel disease.
- You have a genetic syndrome such as familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP) or hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer

People at high risk for colorectal cancer may need earlier or more frequent tests than other people. Be sure to talk to your doctor about when to begin screening and how often you should be tested.

Precancerous polyps and early-stage colorectal cancer don't always cause symptoms, especially at first. A person can have polyps or colorectal cancer and not even know it. If you're over 50, getting a colorectal cancer screening test could help save your life.

## Screening Saves Lives



The Centers for Disease Control (CDC's) multiyear *Screen for Life: National Colorectal Cancer Action Campaign* informs men and women aged 50 years or older about the importance of having regular colorectal cancer screening tests.

Several screening tests can be used to find polyps or colorectal cancer. Each can be used alone. Sometimes they are used in combination with each other.

### High-Sensitivity FOBT (Stool Test)

There are two types of FOBT. One uses the chemical guaiac to detect blood. The other, a fecal immunochemical test (FIT), uses antibodies to detect blood in the stool. You receive a test kit from your health care provider.

### Flexible Sigmoidoscopy

For this test, the doctor puts a short, thin, flexible, lighted tube into your rectum. The doctor checks for polyps or cancer inside the rectum and lower third of the colon.

### Colonoscopy

This is similar to flexible sigmoidoscopy, except the doctor uses a longer, thin, flexible, lighted tube to check for polyps or cancer inside the rectum and the entire colon. During the test, the doctor can find and remove most polyps and some cancers. Colonoscopy also is used as a follow-up test if anything unusual is found during one of the other screening tests.

