

# COLON CANCER: What to Watch for and How to Prevent it

## WEBINAR OVERVIEW & RESOURCES

Colon cancer is the third leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States. It's also the most treatable when caught early\*. Here are key insights from a webinar presentation by Anil Kabrawala, MD, a PeaceHealth gastroenterologist, and Nina Dhami, MD, a PeaceHealth radiation oncologist, on identifying and preventing colon cancer.

### What to watch for – risk factors, screenings and signs

Colorectal cancers isn't like other cancers that you might be able to see, feel or notice on your own. It's considered a silent killer. That's why understanding your risks and getting screened are so important.

#### Risk factors for colon cancer

- Age – about 12% of colorectal cancer cases will be in people under age 50.
- Family and personal history – risks go up if close relatives (parent, grandparent, sibling) have been diagnosed with colon cancer.
- Inflammatory bowel disease (ulcerative colitis, Crohn's colitis).
- Race – African-Americans have the highest rate of colon cancer of all ethnic groups in the US.
- Unhealthy diet or habits that can undercut physical health.

#### Types of screenings for colon cancer

- Stool-based tests – simple at-home tests that only require "going" on the test strip.
- Endoscopic and radiographic exams – painless exams done in same-day medical offices; they require some preparation and offer the best visibility into the health of the colon; any polyps discovered during the exam can also usually be removed at that time.

**Colonoscopy alone can help reduce colorectal cancer incidence by 40% and mortality by 50%!**

#### Colonoscopy screening recommendations

- Normal risk – begin at age 45 and then every 10 years unless otherwise determined by findings.
- Average risk (first-degree relative diagnosed with colorectal cancer at or older than age 60) – begin at age 45.
- Higher risk (first-degree relative diagnosed with colorectal cancer younger than age 60) – begin at 40 years of age (or 10 years younger than the age at which your relative was diagnosed).

#### Signs to pay attention to

- Blood in the stool
- Narrowness of the stool
- Iron deficiency or anemia
- Changes in bowel habits
- Unexplained weight loss

## How to prevent colon cancer – healthy everyday habits

You can take actions to prevent colon cancer.

### Actions you can take to reduce your risks for colon cancer

- Manage your weight – make it a goal to get your body mass index (BMI) under 30.
- Stay active and exercise – this helps you maintain your weight and build muscle
- Talk to your doctor about calcium and vitamin D.
- Limit or avoid alcohol and tobacco.
- Get screened, as recommended by your doctor based on personal and family history.

AVOID OR LIMIT THESE	ADOPT THESE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Alcohol</li> <li>■ Red meat</li> <li>■ Processed meat</li> <li>■ Eggs</li> <li>■ Pork</li> <li>■ Cigarette smoking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Fruits and vegetables</li> <li>■ Whole grains</li> <li>■ Legumes (beans)</li> <li>■ Calcium and dairy products (yogurt)</li> <li>■ Fish (pesco-vegetarian) or semi-vegetarian diet</li> <li>■ Micronutrients:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Calcium</li> <li>■ Zinc</li> <li>■ Magnesium</li> <li>■ Folic acid</li> <li>■ Vitamin D</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

### Eat fiber (prebiotic)

Nearly 95% of Americans don't get enough fiber, according to the National Institutes of Health. Experts recommend 25-30 grams of dietary fiber from food every day; most adults average about 15 grams. Dietary fiber feeds your good gut bacteria. (See separate handout for easy ways to get recommended daily amount.)

### Boost intake of probiotic and polyphenols

- Probiotics (e.g., yogurt) are live bacteria that may restore balance and offer protection from harmful bacteria.
- Polyphenols are plant-based antioxidants (e.g., black coffee, green tea, olive oil, berries, nuts, flaxseed) that can reduce inflammation and protect against colon polyps.



## Additional resources

Following are excellent videos offering clear information on colon, cancer and colonoscopies:

- TED/Ed Who's at risk for colon cancer ( <https://youtu.be/H5zin8jKeT0> )
- ASGE's What to expect from your colonoscopy procedure ( [https://youtu.be/uCpj\\_Taw8i4](https://youtu.be/uCpj_Taw8i4) )