



# Wellness Buddy Tip

Providing guidance and support to make the "healthy choice the easy choice."

Chronic Disease Health Promotion and Education Program  
Jackson County Health Department

## Colorectal Cancer Awareness Screen for Life

Colon cancer is one of the most preventable cancers. Testing can identify problems and finds growths before they become cancer. If a pre-cancerous growth is found, you can stop colon cancer before it starts. And if colon cancer is found early, you have a good chance of beating it with treatment. Most people should begin testing at age 50, although people with certain risk factors should be tested earlier or more often.

Most colon cancers occur in men and women who are 50 or older. So if you are in that age group, you can be at risk or have the disease and not even know it — even if you have no family history of colon cancer. You need to be tested. And if your parent, sibling or child has had colon cancer, testing is even more important for you.

Colorectal cancer (commonly referred to as 'colon cancer') develops in the lower part of the digestive system, also referred to as the gastrointestinal, or GI, system. The digestive tract processes the food you eat and rids the body of solid waste matter. This cancer usually develops from pre-cancerous changes or growths in the lining of the colon and rectum. These growths in the colon or rectum are called polyps.

In Florida, an estimated



11,420 people will be diagnosed with colon cancer this year and 3,520 deaths from colon cancer will occur.

The risk of colorectal cancer increases with age. More than 90 percent of cases are diagnosed in individuals 50 and older.

A personal or family history of colorectal cancer or polyps or of inflammatory bowel disease of significant duration increases the likelihood of having colorectal cancer. Also, there are certain genetic factors that increase the likelihood of having colon cancer, including condition called familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP), Gardner's syndrome, hereditary non-polyposis colorectal cancer, and being of Ashkenazi Jewish descent.

African Americans have the highest colorectal cancer rates and the highest rate of death from the disease of any racial or ethnic group in the United States.

Other risk factors include: smoking, alcohol consumption, obesity, physical

inactivity, diet high in fat &/ or red meat or processed meat, diet low in fruits and vegetables.

Early colorectal cancer usually causes no symptoms and can be detected by available colorectal cancer screening tests. However, as colorectal cancer progresses, the disease may cause symptoms. People with the following symptoms should see their doctor immediately:

- 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 doesn't go away even after you do have a bowel movement
- Bleeding from the rectum or blood in the stool
- Cramping or gnawing stomach pain
- Decreased appetite
- Weakness and fatigue
- Jaundice (yellow-green color of the skin and white part of the eye)

Note: Signs and symptoms of colorectal cancer typically occur in advanced stages of the disease.

Information from the American Cancer Society

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### Special points of interest:

- Reduce your risk by:

*Eating right*

*Maintaining an appropriate body weight*

*Limiting consumption of alcohol and high-fat foods, and*

*Becoming more physically active.*



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