



WomensHealth.gov

1-800-994-9662

TDD: 1-888-220-5446

Cancer of the Colon and the Rectum

Q: What is cancer of the colon and the rectum?

A: Cancer is a disease in which certain body cells don't function right, divide very fast, and produce too much tissue that forms a tumor. The colon and rectum are parts of the body's digestive system, which removes nutrients from food and stores waste until it passes out of the body. Together, the colon and rectum form a long, muscular tube called the large intestine (also called the large bowel). Cancer that begins in the colon is called colon cancer. Cancer that begins in the rectum is called rectal cancer. Cancers affecting either of these organs also may be called colorectal cancer.

Q: Why should I be concerned about cancer of the colon and the rectum?

A: Colorectal cancer affects an equal number of women and men each year, and is most often found in people over the age of 50. Excluding skin cancer, it is the third most diagnosed cancer for women, following breast and lung cancers. And it is the second leading cause of cancer death in the United States. Colorectal cancer is often called a "silent" disease since symptoms don't always develop until it is difficult to cure. The good news is that you can help prevent colorectal cancer, and it is mostly curable when it is found early through regular screening tests.

Q: Where can I learn more about cancer of the colon and the rectum?

A: The National Cancer Institute (NCI) is the federal government's authority on colorectal cancer. Contact them at 800-4-CANCER (800-422-6237) or go to the following web site: <http://www.nci.nih.gov/cancerinfo/wyntk/colon-and-rectum> ■



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For more information...

You can also find out more about colorectal cancer by contacting the National Women's Health Information Center (800-994-9662) or the following organizations:

**National Cancer Institute
Cancer Information Service**

Phone: (800) 422-6237

Internet Address: <http://cis.nci.nih.gov>

Colon Cancer Alliance

Phone: (413) 383-7603

Internet Address:

<http://www.ccalliance.org>

**Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention Cancer Prevention and
Control Program**

Phone: (888) 842-6355

Internet Address:

<http://www.cdc.gov/cancer>

American Cancer Society

Phone: (800) ACS-2345

Internet Address: <http://www.cancer.org>

**American College of
Gastroenterology**

Phone: (301) 652-3890

Internet Address: <http://www.acg.gi.org>

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