

African Americans and Colorectal Cancer

Colorectal cancer (CRC) is the third most common cancer in black men and women. African Americans are also diagnosed with CRC and young-onset CRC **more often** than members of other communities in the US. Colorectal cancer can be prevented through screening and is treatable when caught early. Generally, African Americans are at **higher risk** for cancer than other racial or ethnic groups in the US. More than **one in three** will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime.

Risk for African Americans

African Americans are at higher risk of colorectal cancer.

LIFETIME RISK OF COLORECTAL CANCER*

Diagnosis

1 in 23 for men

1 in 24 for women

Death

1 in 46 for men

1 in 51 for women

*Among African Americans

ESTIMATED ANNUAL IMPACT*

Diagnoses

Men: **9,880**

Women: **9,860**

Deaths

Men: **3,810**

Women: **3,300**

*Among African Americans, according to 2020 estimates from the American Cancer Society

COMMON SYMPTOMS:

Colorectal cancer first develops with few, if any, symptoms. If symptoms are present, they may include:

A change in bowel habits: These include diarrhea, constipation, a change in the consistency of your stool, or finding that your stools are narrower than usual

Ongoing stomach pains: Such as those from cramps, gas, pain, the feeling of being full or bloated, or that your bowel does not empty completely

Rectal bleeding: Blood (either bright red or very dark) in your stool

Weakness or fatigue: These may be in addition to unexplained weight loss, nausea, or vomiting

Colorectal cancer can develop without symptoms. That's why on-time screening is critical. Learn more at [GetScreened.org](https://www.getscreened.org).

STAGES OF DIAGNOSIS

Colorectal cancer is 90% beatable when caught early through screening. Once cancer has spread, it becomes much more difficult to treat. Nearly one-in-four colorectal cancer cases in African Americans are diagnosed at stages when it is harder to treat. **If you have symptoms, speak with a medical provider immediately.**



Prevention

GET SCREENED

Colorectal cancer can easily be prevented through screening. Colon cancer and rectal cancer are also highly treatable if caught early. All African Americans should have screening tests starting at age 45. Screening tests can be completed in a clinical setting or at home. Talk to a doctor about what's right for you.

Learn more at [GetScreened.org](https://www.getscreened.org).

FAMILY HISTORY

Most people with colorectal cancer do not have a family history of the disease. But some families have more cancer than we would expect. This suggests a genetic and/or hereditary factor.

You are at increased risk if one immediate family member (parent or sibling) or multiple relatives have colorectal cancer or polyps—abnormal growths in the colon or rectum.

Talk with your family about their medical history so you can take control of your health. If you're at increased risk, please talk with a doctor about how and when you should be screened.

LIVE A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

Beyond screening, there are many things you can do to live a healthy colon lifestyle. Know your risk factors and family history. Most importantly, listen to your body. If something doesn't feel right or changes, take control and speak to your doctor. Pre-existing conditions that increase risk of colorectal cancer include type 2 diabetes, obesity, inherited syndromes including Lynch, and inflammatory bowel disease.

Tips for a healthier colon:

- Eat fiber (fruits and vegetables)
- Drink plenty of water
- Take in whole grains
- Drink low-fat or fat-free milk
- Eat lean proteins (chicken, turkey) instead of processed meats (hot dogs, lunch meat)
- Reduce excess sugar and fried foods
- Limit alcohol intake
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Don't smoke
- Exercise regularly
- Monitor bathroom habits for any changes

Have questions? Call our free helpline at **(877) 422-2030**.

