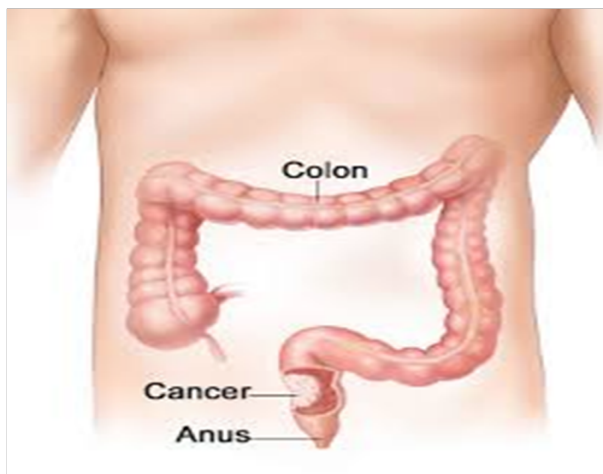


COLORECTAL CANCER

What is colorectal cancer?

Colorectal cancer starts in the colon or the rectum. These cancers can also be referred to separately as colon cancer or rectal cancer, but are often combined as colorectal cancer.

Sometimes abnormal growths, called *polyps*, form in the colon or rectum. Over time, some polyps may turn into cancer



The colon and rectum absorb fluid to form solid waste (fecal matter or stool) that then passes from the body.

Most cases of colon cancer begin as small, noncancerous (benign) clumps of cells called adenomatous polyps. Over time some of these polyps become colon cancers

What are the risk factors for colorectal cancer?

a. ***Factors that cannot Change***

- **Age:** Younger adults can develop colorectal cancer, but the chances increase after age 50.
- **Family history of colorectal cancer:** Approximately, 1 in 5 people who develop colorectal cancer have other family

members who have been affected by this disease.

- **Inherited syndromes:** About 5% to 10% of people who develop colorectal cancer have inherited gene defects (mutations) that cause the disease. Often, these defects lead to cancer that occurs at a younger age.
- **Racial and ethnic background:** African Americans have the highest colorectal cancer incidence and mortality rates of all racial groups.
- **Type 2 Diabetes:** People with type 2 diabetes have an increased risk of colorectal cancer.

b. Lifestyle-related factors:



- **Diet:** A diet consisting of foods rich in fat, sugar, low fibre, red meats can increase colorectal cancer risk.
- **Physical inactivity:** If you are not physically active, you have a greater chance of developing colorectal cancer. Increasing activity may help reduce your risk.
- **Obesity:** If you are very overweight or obese, your risk of developing colorectal cancer increases.

- **Smoking and heavy alcohol use:** Long-term smokers and those who consume high levels of alcohol are more likely to develop colorectal cancer.

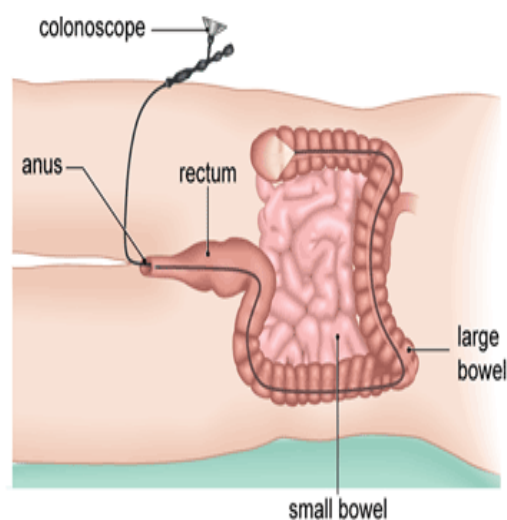
Reducing Risks of Colorectal Cancer

Colon Cancer Screening: Why go for colorectal cancer screening?

Regular colorectal cancer screening is one of the most powerful weapons for preventing colorectal cancer as polyps can be detected before they develop into cancer cells.

How is colon cancer screening done?

- a. A stool sample to **test for occult blood** in the stools
- b. **Colonoscopy:** an exam to detect abnormalities in the colon and rectum using a long, flexible tube inserted into the rectum with a tiny video camera at the tip of the tube allows the doctor to view the inside of the entire colon



Where a colonoscope is passed



When should I go for screening?

Screening should be considered 10 years earlier from index diagnosis of a first relative.

What else can I do to reduce my risk for developing colon cancer?



- Consume a diet low in animal fats and high in fruits, vegetables and whole grains
- Increasing physical activity: At least 30 minutes of moderate exercise daily
- Limit alcohol consumption
- Stop smoking tobacco

What are the signs and symptoms of colorectal cancer?

Colorectal cancer may cause one or more of the symptoms below. If you have any of the following you should see your doctor:

- A **change in bowel habits**, such as diarrhea, constipation, or narrowing of the stool, which lasts for more than a few days
- A **feeling that you need to have a bowel movement** that is not relieved by doing so

- **Rectal bleeding, dark stools, or blood in the stool**

(often, though, the stool will look normal)

- **Cramping** or abdominal (belly) pain

- **Weakness and fatigue**

- **Unintended weight** loss

N/B: *Most of these symptoms are more often caused by conditions other than colorectal cancer, such as infection, hemorrhoids, or inflammatory bowel disease. Still, if you have any of these problems, it's important to see your doctor right away so the cause can be found and treated.*

How is colorectal cancer diagnosed?

Colorectal cancer is often found after symptoms appear, however, symptoms usually only appears when the disease is more advanced.

Blood tests: Certain blood tests diagnose colorectal cancer or help to monitor the disease once diagnosed with cancer, including a complete blood count (CBC), liver enzymes or tumour markers.

Ultrasound, CT or MRI Scan: Imaging tests such as an ultrasound, CT scan or an x-ray produce detailed images of the body.

Colonoscopy: A colonoscopy uses a scope to examine the inside of your colon. A colonoscope uses technology to closely examine the inside of the colon. Colonoscopy uses a long,

flexible and slender tube attached to a video camera and monitor to view your entire colon and rectum.

Biopsy: If any suspicious areas are found, your doctor can pass surgical tools through the tube to take tissue samples (biopsies) for analysis.

Once you've been diagnosed with colon cancer, your doctor will order tests to determine the stage of your cancer. Staging helps determine what treatments are most appropriate for you.

What are my treatment options?

The type of treatment your doctor recommends will depend largely on the stage of your cancer.

The three primary treatment options:

Surgery: Colectomy and rectal surgery for rectal cancer is a good option for colorectal cancers that have not been spread to other organs.

Chemotherapy: Chemotherapy uses drugs to destroy cancer cells.

When is chemotherapy given?

- Chemotherapy for colon cancer is usually given after surgery if the cancer has spread to the lymph nodes to reduce the risk of cancer recurrence.
- Chemotherapy can also be given to relieve symptoms of colon cancer that has spread to other areas of the body.
- Chemotherapy may be used before surgery to shrink the cancer before an operation.
- In people with rectal cancer, chemotherapy is typically used along with radiation therapy.

Radiation Therapy:



Radiation therapy uses powerful energy sources to:

- Kill cancer cells that might remain after surgery
- Shrink large tumors before an operation so that they can be removed more easily
- Relieve symptoms of colon cancer and rectal cancer

What are the side effects of colorectal cancer treatment?

- When the cancer spreads and blocks the rectum, surgery is done where part of the colon is removed. A colostomy- which is an opening for passage of stool other than the anus is created. Colostomy bags are used.



Colostomy bag

- **Chemotherapy** may cause nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, mouth sores and even loss of hair among other side effects.

What next after colorectal cancer diagnosis?

- Discuss with your doctor on the appropriate treatment option
- Always seek for a second opinion from other cancer experts
- Learn about the treatment side effects and how to manage them
- In case surgery is done and you need colostomy bags, discuss with your doctor on how to put it on , when to change and where to purchase them
- Join a colon cancer support group like Stoma World

REFERENCES:

For More information Contact Kenya Cancer Association on:

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