



# The Oregon Clinic: Colon Cancer Awareness & Risk Assessment

Colon cancer is the third most commonly diagnosed cancer and the second most common cause of cancer death in the United States. Furthermore, many cancer cases and deaths occur needlessly, as they could be prevented if more people took advantage of colon cancer screening. Screening and early detection saves lives.

## Understanding Colon Cancer

Colon Cancer is cancer of the colon (the large bowel or large intestine) and the rectum. Colon cancer may begin as non-cancerous polyps, which are grape-like growths on the lining of the colon and rectum. For reasons that are not fully understood, these polyps may become cancerous. According to the National Colon Cancer Research Alliance, nearly 150,000 Americans are diagnosed with colon cancer annually. Even as the second leading cause of cancer in the United States for men and women combined, colon cancer is one of the most curable cancers when detected at an early stage.

## What are the Risk Factors for Colon Cancer?

Colon cancer can affect anyone – men or women – and your risk increases with age. Some people are at great risk for the disease than others, they include:

- People with a personal or family history of colon polyps, inflammatory bowel disease, ulcerative colitis, or Crohn's Disease.
- People with a personal or family history of colon, ovarian, endometrial, breast or some other cancers of the GI tract or the female reproductive system.
- People of African-American descent, who are often diagnosed at a later stage of the disease and who should start screening at an earlier age.
- Men and women age 50 or older.

Take our [Risk Assessment](#) to see if YOU are at risk for colon cancer.

### Request a Screening Colonoscopy!

Complete our [online form](#) or call our offices:

Gastroenterology East  
**(503) 963-2795**

Gastroenterology West  
**(503) 297-8081**

Gastroenterology South  
**(503) 692-3750**

Gastrointestinal & Minimally Invasive Surgery  
Colorectal Surgeons  
**(503) 281-0561**

[View our office locations](#)

## What are the Symptoms of Colon Cancer?

The following are the most common symptoms of colon cancer. However, each individual may experience symptoms differently:

- The most common symptom of colon cancer is having no symptoms at all.
- Feeling of bloated or full in the stomach.
- A change in bowel habits such as diarrhea, constipation, or narrowing of the stool that lasts for more than a few days.
- Having gas pains.
- Rectal bleeding or blood in the stool, which is often visible.
- Cramping or stomach pain.
- Decreased appetite.
- Vomiting.
- Weakness and fatigue.
- Losing weight when you are not trying to.

The symptoms of colon cancer may resemble other conditions, such as infections, hemorrhoids and inflammatory bowel disease. It is possible to have colon cancer and not have any symptoms.

## Facts about Colon Cancer

*What is the colon cancer survival rate? Is colon cancer preventable?*

- When colon cancer is diagnosed at an early stage, the 5 year survival rate is 90%.
- When colon cancer is NOT diagnosed until it has spread to distant organs, the 5 year survival rate is only 10%.
- More than 90% of people diagnosed with colon cancer are 50 years and older.
- More than 30,000 lives could be saved each year if Americans over 50 years old were screened for colon cancer.
- Colon cancer is highly preventable, treatable, and often curable.
- According to the National Colorectal Cancer Research Alliance, nearly 150,000 Americans are diagnosed with colon cancer annually and an estimated 50,000 die, most of them unnecessarily.
- Over 15,000 people in the U.S. are diagnosed with colon cancer each year under the recommended screening age of 50. Some individuals should be screened earlier. Check with your physician if you have risk factors or symptoms.
- A low-fat diet high in vegetables and fruits and regular exercise can help reduce your risk of colon cancer.
- Regular screening tests may detect pre-cancerous polyps. Removal of these may prevent cancer from developing.

- Beginning at age 50, men and women should be screened regularly for colon cancer - screening tests are not painful, and are often covered by Medicare and most health insurers.
- It is important to get a colonoscopy if you have symptoms at any age.
- A colonoscopy is the best way to find and remove colon polyps, preventing colon cancer before it starts.

## Colon Cancer Risk Assessment

If you answer YES to one or more of the following questions you should:

- Talk to your doctor about regular colon cancer screenings;
- Schedule a colonoscopy with The Oregon Clinic (call or [online request](#))

**Gastroenterology South**  
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### **Q: Are you over age 50?**

*90% of colon cancers are diagnosed in people over age 50.*

### **Q: Have you had inflammatory bowel disease such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis?**

*A history of these diseases increases your chances of colon cancer. Be sure you get regular colonoscopies.*

### **Q: Do you have relatives (siblings, parents, children) who developed colon cancer at a young age?**

*If yes, your risk for colon cancer is increased. Your doctor may consider genetic testing to determine your risk.*

### **Q: Are you an Ashkanzi Jew or African American?**

*If so, your rate for developing colon cancer is higher than the general population.*

### **Q: Do you eat plenty of fruit and vegetables and avoid high fat foods?**

*Diets rich in vegetables and fruit are helpful in avoiding colon cancer. High fat, low fiber diets increase your chances for developing colon cancer.*

### **Q: Are you physically active?**

*People who do not exercise regularly may have a higher risk of colon cancer.*

### **Q: Are you overweight?**

*Being over your ideal weight puts you at greater risk to develop colon cancer.*

**Q: Do you smoke?**

*People who smoke have a 30-40% higher risk of dying of colon cancer.*

**Q: Do you drink more than you should?**

*Some studies show a link between heavy drinking and colon cancer.*