

Colon Cancer

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Cancer is very hard to treat but there are many ways to prevent this disease. As for any cancer, colon cancer is deadly as well but can be prevented if detected early. Colorectal cancer is the country's deadliest cancer (ACS, 2020). The colon is a very delicate organ at the end of your digestive system in your large intestine. The colon's main job is to remove waste from your body. Your colon walls will squeeze together to push out any waste. There is not a specific reason as to why colon cancer can be caught. However, there are many factors that can contribute and lead up to colon cancer. Being aware of factors causing colon cancer and the statistics, you can prevent getting colon cancer and stay healthy.

Many of the potential risk factors that can lead to colon cancer are, people of older age, African-American race, personal history of colorectal cancer or polyp, inflammatory intestinal conditions, family history, low fiber or high fat diet, diabetes, smoking, obesity, alcohol, being inactive, and radiation in abdomen from previous treatments (Mayo Clinic, n.d). Inflammatory intestinal conditions, also known as inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), is when your digestive system becomes inflamed and sometimes painful. The two common types of IBD are colitis and Crohn's disease (Hoffman, 2020). Inflammatory bowel diseases will have an effect on your colon because the muscle lining of your digestive system will be inflamed causing it to be harder to remove waste and if it is removed, it will then be painful due to the inflammation (Mayo Clinic, n.d). If you are able to distinguish what causes IBD's then you can, not only stay healthy, but also prevent colon cancer in the future.

In a Multiethnic Cohort Study, it shows the distribution of risk factors. African Americans, Latinos, and Native Hawaiians consume the most red meat. With 13.4% for African American males and 12.8% for African American females. 11.6% of Native Hawaiian males and 11.8% females. 15.2% of Latino males and 14.4% females (NCIB, n.d). Red meat is a factor in

colon cancer. Looking at this data you see which ethnic groups consume the most red meat and are at risk for colon cancer. There's not a certain reason why red meat can cause colon cancer but it has been suggested that it's due to the nitrates in processed meat ruining the DNA or the chemicals caused from grilling meat (NCI, 2021). Knowing how red meat affects your body and who eats it the most, can prevent colon cancer. If you see a friend eating a lot of red meat, you can tell them how they should cut it off a little and try something different. Since chemicals form when cooking red meat and are then consumed after eating, it should be a good reason to lay off the red meat and stay healthy.

As I mentioned before, African Americans are at risk of getting colon cancer. You may know a very famous actor that died of colon cancer, Chadwick Boseman, the actor of Black Panther. Chadwick Boseman died at age 43. Although colon cancer is typically more common around those 50 years and older, African Americans can tend to detect it earlier. In the year 2020, there was about 12% of colorectal cancers, that's about 18,000 cases--that were diagnosed being under the age of 50 in the USA (ACS, 2020). African Americans are 20% more likely to get the cancer itself and 40% likely to die from it compared to other ethnic groups (ACS, 2020). Looking back at that data you can see how that's a fairly large number just for those under 50. The reason for African Americans being at risk of colon cancer more than most races is because of the obstacles they have to face when it comes to treatment and detection. It can also be because of low-income for health insurance, healthy foods, and unsafe environments (ACS, 2020). While not having enough money for health insurance, healthy foods, and an unsafe environment, it can be very bad, especially with all of those combined. Without health insurance, you would have to pay more for clinical or hospital visits. Without the healthy foods, you won't stay strong and healthy enough to fight off any sickness. Without an unsafe environment, you

can be exposed to toxic habits like smoking and drinking which will encourage you to do so as well.

There's some factors that you can't control and change such as family history, personal history prior to polyps, etc. But there are ways to change your lifestyle for the other factors. You can eat healthy, eat whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. Some examples of whole grains are brown rice, oatmeal, wheat bread, and any other food containing wheat. You can also limit your alcohol intake or drink none and drink more water. It is recommended that you eat less processed red meat. By doing so, you can prevent polyps as well. Be sure to do screenings to make sure your colon is healthy (Wilkinson, 2020). No smoking and cut out any other tobacco products. It is very important to maintain a healthy weight and exercise most days of the week. These aren't certain preventions for colon cancer but they're a step ahead to be extra safe.

Colon cancer is typically caught in those 50 years of age and above, which is why many doctors require a colonoscopy. Colonoscopy is where doctors take a long but flexible tube (endoscope) with a tiny camera at the end and put through your rectum into your colon to check for any cancer or polyps forming (Hoffman, 2020). Polyps are mainly little, but can be large, lumps that form in your colon. They're typically cancerous but eventually, overtime, they can form into cancer (Mayo Clinic, n.d). This is extremely important due to the fact that they can save your life if anything is detected. If you have polyps or colon cancer, you can catch it in time before it starts growing and remove it. Although removing polyps doesn't make it permanent to never grow back, it's better than letting it form into cancer. Even after you remove the polyp, you need annual screenings to make sure it didn't grow back. It's recommended for an annual screening by almost every doctor you will meet. It's better to be safe than sorry and to detect anything at all.

Without proper self care like eating fruits and vegetables, working out, and cutting out toxic substances --like smoking and drinking-- you can get colon cancer. Like I mentioned earlier, colon cancer is incredibly hard to cure once you have reached the last stages. However, I strive to inform those around the age of 50 about how they can help themselves stay healthy by creating a website listing the basic information. For those who unfortunately already have colon cancer, I will be collecting money donations to help them with their comfort at the hospital and make them feel better. There isn't a certain way to get colon cancer but you can try to prevent getting the cancer in the first place by switching your lifestyle habits, starting early, to get a jumpstart. Any small ways to prevent colon cancer is better than none. Just like any cancer, colon cancer must be detected early in order to take effective action. It's not an easy cancer to deal with and it is heartbreaking to watch those you love go through it. However, while knowing how to maintain your body health, you can help others as well to keep them safe and teach them.

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