

# BLACK AMERICANS AND COLORECTAL CANCER

Colorectal cancer, or CRC, is a cancer of the colon or rectum. CRC is the third most commonly diagnosed cancer and the second leading cause of cancer death in men and women combined in the United States.<sup>4</sup> Early cases often begin as noncancerous polyps in the lower digestive tract. These polyps typically have no symptoms but can be detected by screening.<sup>2</sup>

**FOR THE YEAR 2020, THE AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY ESTIMATES**

**147,950**  
**PEOPLE DIAGNOSED<sup>4</sup>**

**53,200**  
**RELATED DEATHS<sup>4</sup>**

## WHAT ARE THE CAUSES?

Most colorectal cancers begin as a pre-existing polyps and can be attributed to a variety of risk factors. These can be caused by lifestyle factors like lack of exercise, smoking, heavy alcohol use, and type 2 diabetes, but they can also be attributed to having a family history of CRC or predisposing conditions like inflammatory bowel disease.<sup>3</sup>

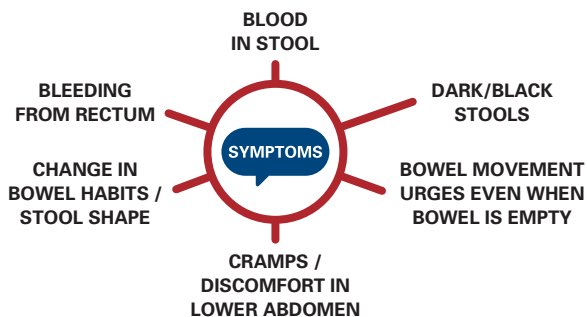
From 2009-2013:

**INCIDENCE RATES: ~20% HIGHER**  
**IN BLACK AMERICANS VS WHITES<sup>4</sup>**

**DEATH RATES: ~40% HIGHER**  
**IN BLACK AMERICANS VS WHITES<sup>4</sup>**

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Early CRC is often asymptomatic. As a tumor grows, it may cause bleeding or an obstruction in the intestine; occasionally, blood loss from the cancer results in anemia, which causes weakness, fatigue, and shortness of breath. Additionally, the following symptoms may occur with CRC:<sup>2</sup>



## REDUCE YOUR RISK

There are things you can do to reduce your risk of developing colorectal cancer:<sup>2,3</sup>



**QUIT SMOKING**



**LIMIT ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION**



**EXERCISE REGULARLY / INCREASE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**



**MAINTAIN HEALTHY WEIGHT / DIET**



**VISIT DOCTOR REGULARLY / FOLLOW RECOMMENDED CRC SCREENINGS GUIDELINES**

SOURCES:

1. Rawla, P., Sunkara, T. & Barsouk, A. Epidemiology of colorectal cancer: Incidence, mortality, survival, and risk factors. *Przeglad Gastroenterologiczny* vol. 14 89–103 (2019)
2. Colorectal Cancer Facts & Figures 2017-2019. (2017)
3. Lin, J. S. et al. Evidence Synthesis Number 135 Screening for Colorectal Cancer: An Updated Systematic Review for the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Acknowledgments. *www.ahrq.gov* (2015)
4. *ccalliance.org*

## CHECK THE QUESTIONS YOU'D LIKE TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR



### RISKS AND TESTS

- What kinds of tests will I need to find out if I have colorectal cancer?
- Which tests are most appropriate for me, given my gender, age and race/ethnicity?
- How often should I have testing to keep track of my risk factors?
- What plan do you recommend that I follow to lower my risk?
- I don't have any family history of colorectal cancer or of colorectal polyps. Should I still be tested?
- How should I prepare for the test?
- Should I have someone with me on the day of the test?
- When and how will I learn the results of the test?



### COLORECTAL CANCER

- Do I have colorectal cancer?
- Can you explain to me what colorectal cancer is? Are there different types?
- What do you think has caused it?
- Where is the cancer located? Has the cancer spread beyond where it started?
- What is the cancer's stage (extent), and what does that mean?
- Will I need other tests before we can decide on treatment?
- If I'm concerned about the costs and insurance coverage for my diagnosis and treatment, who can help me?



### TREATMENT

- What treatments can help with my condition?
- Do I need medication, and if so, what should I know about them?
- Are there other treatment options?
- What are the benefits and risks of all my treatment options?
- How will we decide which treatment option is right for me?
- Where can I go for more information on my treatment options?
- How quickly do we need to decide on treatment?
- What should I do to be ready for treatment?
- How long will treatment last? What will it be like? Where will it be done?
- What if I have transportation problems getting to and from treatment?



### LIFESTYLE

- How can making changes to my lifestyle help now that I have colorectal cancer?
- Do I need to change what I eat during treatment?
- Are there any limits on what I can do?
- Can I exercise during treatment? If so, what kind should I do, and how often?



### HELP

- What are the symptoms of colorectal cancer that I should watch out for, and what do I do?
- Where can I go to find support?
- How can I learn more?
- What do I do if my symptoms are getting worse?
- Who do I call if I think I'm having an emergency?
- What support resources are available to help with finances?
- Do you have a social worker and/or peer navigator to help me?

### MORE QUESTIONS FOR YOUR DOCTOR

Use the space below for any additional questions you have for your doctor:

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