

# Facts About: COLORECTAL CANCER



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Cancer Prevention,  
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## About Colorectal Cancer

Most colorectal cancer can be prevented or cured. Screening (or testing) for colorectal cancer (that is, cancer of the colon or rectum) can save lives. When colorectal cancer is found at an early stage, it can be cured. A polyp can turn into colorectal cancer. Polyps can be taken out before they grow into cancer.

## Who Should Be Screened

People who should be screened for colorectal cancer include:

- Anyone 50 years old and older; and
- Anyone under 50 years old who:
  - has had any of the following: colorectal cancer in the past, an “adenomatous polyp,” inflammatory bowel disease (ulcerative colitis or Crohn’s colitis), or cancer of the ovary or endometrium;
  - has a mother, father, brother, sister, or child who had colorectal cancer or an adenomatous polyp; or
  - has a family history of genetic forms of colorectal cancer or polyps.

## Screening For Colorectal Cancer

There are two main ways to be screened (tested) if you have an average risk of colorectal cancer:

- **Colonoscopy**; or
- **Fecal occult blood test (FOBT)** once a year, along with a **sigmoidoscopy** once every five years.

**Colonoscopy** and the **sigmoidoscopy** are special tests where a doctor uses a long, flexible tube with a light (scope) to look inside your large intestines (colon). Colonoscopy looks at the whole colon. Sigmoidoscopy looks at the lower third of the colon.

**Fecal occult blood test (FOBT)** checks for blood in the stool or feces—even when you cannot see the blood. Blood can be in the stool because of cancer, but also because of other problems. Sometimes the test does not show blood even when a person has cancer. That is why an FOBT is not the only test a person needs. The stool samples are taken at home, with bowel movements on separate days. The test is then sent to a lab for results. Medicines and foods may affect test results of some types of tests.

## Facts

### Colorectal Cancer in Maryland

There were 2,630 people in Maryland diagnosed with colorectal cancer in 2010 and 950 people died of colorectal cancer in Maryland that year.

## Symptoms

People with colorectal cancer usually do not have symptoms, but sometimes they have:

- blood in the stool;
- a mass or lump in the abdomen;
- cramps or pain in the abdomen, or
- weight loss;
- change in the size of the stool (for example, the stool is thinner) or constipation;
- anemia not caused by other conditions.

Call your doctor to find out more about being screened or if you have symptoms of colorectal cancer.

## Services

Services are provided at no cost to eligible Prince George’s County residents. For more information about eligibility, call 301-883-3524 (TTY/STS dial 711) Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

## For More Information

[www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/health](http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/health)  
[www.cancer.net.nci.nih.gov](http://www.cancer.net.nci.nih.gov)  
[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

[www.cdc.gov/cancer/screenforlife](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/screenforlife)  
[www.acg.gi.org](http://www.acg.gi.org)  
[www.nccr.org](http://www.nccr.org)