

## Colon and Rectal Cancer

Colon and rectal cancer — together known as colorectal cancer — is the third-leading cause of cancer-related deaths in men and the fourth in women. Death rates have been steadily declining by 1.5% every year among older adults, largely due to increased screening and healthier lifestyle habits.

Colorectal screening is recommended for adults ages 45 to 75. It helps doctors detect and remove abnormal growths and find cancer early, when it is most treatable.

### Statistics

- In 2026, an estimated **108,860** new cases of colon cancer and **49,990** of rectal cancer will be diagnosed in the United States.
- An estimated **55,230** people in the United States will die from colorectal cancer in 2026.
- The five-year survival rate for colorectal cancer discovered early and before the cancer spreads is **91%**, but only **1 in 3** of colorectal cases are identified early.
- In Texas, an estimated **13,310 new cases** of colon and rectal cancer and approximately **4,750 deaths** are expected in 2026.

### Risk Factors

Colorectal cancer risk is influenced by lifestyle, health conditions, and genetics. Key risk factors include:

- **Age:** Risk increases with age, with most cases diagnosed in adults 50 and older.
- **Family History:** A personal or family history of colorectal cancer may require earlier or more frequent screening.
- **Inflammatory Bowel Disease:** Chronic inflammatory conditions such as Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis increase risk.
- **Diet:** High intake of red and processed meat raises risk.
- **Personal Health:** Excess body weight, physical inactivity, type 2 diabetes, long-term smoking, and heavy alcohol use all contribute to increased risk.
- **Inherited Syndromes:** Genetic conditions such as Lynch syndrome and familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP) significantly increase risk.

### Symptoms

In its early stages, colorectal cancer may not cause noticeable symptoms. Symptoms may appear as the disease advances. Anyone experiencing the following should talk with a healthcare provider:

- Rectal bleeding or blood in the stool
- Changes in bowel habits (e.g., constipation or diarrhea)
- Changes in stool shape (e.g., narrower than usual)
- Feeling that the bowel is not emptying completely
- Abdominal pain or cramping
- Decreased appetite or unexplained weight loss

In younger adults, colorectal cancer can cause unnoticed blood loss, which can lead to symptoms such as weakness, fatigue, or shortness of breath.

## Prevention

- **Screening:** Screening can find precancerous growths and detect cancer early. Options include at-home stool tests and colonoscopy. Adults at average risk should begin screening at age 45. Those with increased risk should talk with their doctor about starting earlier.
- **Healthy Lifestyle:** Staying at a healthy weight, exercising regularly, stopping smoking, and eating plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains may lower risk.

## Treatment Options

Depending on the stage of disease and individual factors, colorectal cancer may be treated using one or a combination of the following treatments:

- Surgery
- Radiation therapy
- Proton therapy
- Chemotherapy
- Immunotherapy
- Targeted therapies
- Palliative medicine

## About Texas Oncology

Founded in 1986, Texas Oncology is an independent, physician-led practice and a member of the US Oncology Network. With more than 550 physicians and 300 locations across Texas, Texas Oncology serves over 71,000 new cancer patients each year.

Texas Oncology provides advanced care across 19 specialties and offers a comprehensive clinical trials and research program that has contributed to the development of more than 100 FDA-approved cancer therapies. Learn more at [TexasOncology.com](https://www.TexasOncology.com).