

## Colorectal Cancer

Colorectal cancer is a type of cancer that begins in the colon or rectum, which are parts of the digestive system. It typically develops from precancerous polyps in the colon or rectum and can spread to other parts of the body if not detected and treated early.



### Risk Factors:

The risk of colorectal cancer increases with age, particularly after 50. A personal or family history of colorectal cancer or polyps, inflammatory bowel diseases like Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis, and lifestyle factors such as obesity, processed meats, low-fiber diets, physical inactivity, smoking, and heavy alcohol use elevate this risk. Genetic syndromes like familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP) or Lynch syndrome also significantly heighten the risk of developing colorectal cancer.

### Signs and Symptoms:

- Changes in bowel habits (diarrhea, constipation, or changes in stool consistency)
- Rectal bleeding or blood in the stool
- Persistent abdominal discomfort (cramps, gas, or pain)
- Weakness or fatigue
- Unexplained weight loss

### Prevention:

Regular screening tests, such as colonoscopy, stool-based tests (Cologuard, fecal occult blood test, FIT), sigmoidoscopy, and CT colonography, can detect colorectal cancer early when it is most treatable. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle is crucial; this includes a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, regular physical activity, healthy weight, and avoiding smoking, excessive alcohol, and red and processed meats. Those with a family history of colorectal cancer or certain genetic syndromes should consider genetic counseling and testing to assess their risk.

### Take Control of Your Colorectal Health:

Talk to your Doctor Edges healthcare provider about when to start colorectal cancer screening and which tests are right for you based on your age, risk factors, and personal preferences. Early detection is important. Be proactive about maintaining a healthy lifestyle and reducing your risk factors for colorectal cancer. Encourage family members, especially those with a family history of colorectal cancer, to undergo regular screening and adopt healthy lifestyle habits.