

CountyCare Educates Members on Colorectal Cancer

No cost. Quality Care. Close to home. These are CountyCare's promises to its members.

At CountyCare, our priority is keeping our members healthy 365 days a year. We strive to educate our members about health-related causes as often as possible. With March being Colorectal Awareness Month, we want to make sure you and your family are taking the proper steps to ensure your colon is healthy.

What is Colorectal Cancer?

- According to the [American Cancer Society](#), colorectal cancer is a cancer that starts in the colon or the rectum. Most colorectal cancers begin as a growth on the inner lining of the colon or rectum called a *polyp*. Some types of cancer can change into cancer over several years, but not all *polyps* become cancer. Colorectal cancer is the second most common cancer diagnosed in both men and women in the United States. The American Cancer Society estimates that there will be:
 - 95,520 new cases of colon cancer in 2017,
 - 39,910 new cases of rectal cancer; and,
 - 50,260 colorectal cancer deaths during 2017
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) states that in 2016:
 - 136,119 people in the United States were diagnosed with colorectal cancer, including 71,099 men and 65,020 women
 - 51,813 people in the United States died from colorectal cancer, including 27,230 men and 24,583 women.



What are the causes and risk factors?

- Some cancers are caused by changes in the DNA inside cells, which is the case for colorectal cancer. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that your risk for getting colorectal cancer increases with age. More than 90% of cases occur in people who are 50 years old or older. To stay up to date on your health status, individuals 50 or older should get screened, especially if there is a chance that they are at a higher than average risk for colorectal cancer. Schedule an appointment with your primary care provider and discuss getting screened early.

Additional risk factors include:

- Inflammatory bowel disease, such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis
- A personal or family history of colorectal cancer or colorectal polyps
- A genetic syndrome such as familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP) or hereditary non-polyposis colorectal cancer (Lynch syndrome)
- Lack of regular physical activity
- A diet low in fruit and vegetables
- A low-fiber and high-fat diet
- Overweight and obesity
- Alcohol consumption
- Tobacco use

What are the symptoms?

- Sometimes there are no specific symptoms for colorectal cancer. However, some potential symptoms could include:
 - » Blood in or on your stool (bowel movement)
 - » Sudden weight loss
 - » Stomach pain, aches, or cramps that don't go away

Discuss these symptoms with your doctor to rule out any additional problems.

What is CountyCare Doing?

- Although the thought of colorectal cancer may be scary, it can be preventable and treatable through healthy lifestyle and nutritional choices discussed with your primary care provider. We encourage our members 50 and older to schedule a colonoscopy every ten (10) years and a fecal occult blood test (FOBT) every three years with flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years or annual FOBT until age 75.
- We encourage our members to learn more about colorectal cancer. There are several resources available to keep you abreast on the latest findings and risk factors with colorectal cancer.

We thank you for your continued support and participation in our work and your partnership in all that we do.