

# protect your bottom line



Colorectal cancer is the second leading cancer killer in the United States, but it doesn't have to be. If everyone aged 50 years or older had regular screening tests, at least 60% of deaths from this cancer could be avoided.

The colon, often called the rectum or bowel, comprises the greatest portion of the large intestine. As the final part of the digestive process, the colon absorbs remaining nutrients and processes waste for elimination as stool.

Abnormal cells or polyps can develop in the colon or the rectum. Most polyps are harmless but some are not. Early detection can help prevent colorectal cancer by finding and removing polyps.

Call your doctor if you have any symptoms of colorectal cancer, such as:

- Blood in or on the stool
- A change in bowel habits
- Constant diarrhea, constipation, or fatigue
- Stools that are narrower than usual
- Abdominal pain, or problems with gas or bloating
- Unexplained weight loss

## Risk factors and action steps

### Family or personal history with colorectal cancer or polyps

**ACTION** – Share your family and personal health history with your doctor

### Changes in certain genes

**ACTION**– Consider genetic testing

### Conditions that cause inflammation of the colon

**ACTION** – See your gastroenterologist annually and comply with your recommended treatment plan

### Tobacco usage, obesity, or sedentary lifestyle

**ACTION**– Stop smoking and incorporate a healthy eating and exercise plan into your lifestyle

### Diets high in fat and low in calcium, folate, and fiber

**ACTION** – Adapt an eating plan high in fruits and vegetables, high in fiber, low in calories and low in animal fat.



Source: *The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

## Recommended screenings starting at age 50

- Fecal occult blood test – every year
- Sigmoidoscopy – every five years (if not having colonoscopy)
- Colonoscopy – every ten years. Individuals with risk factors may require earlier or more frequent screenings.