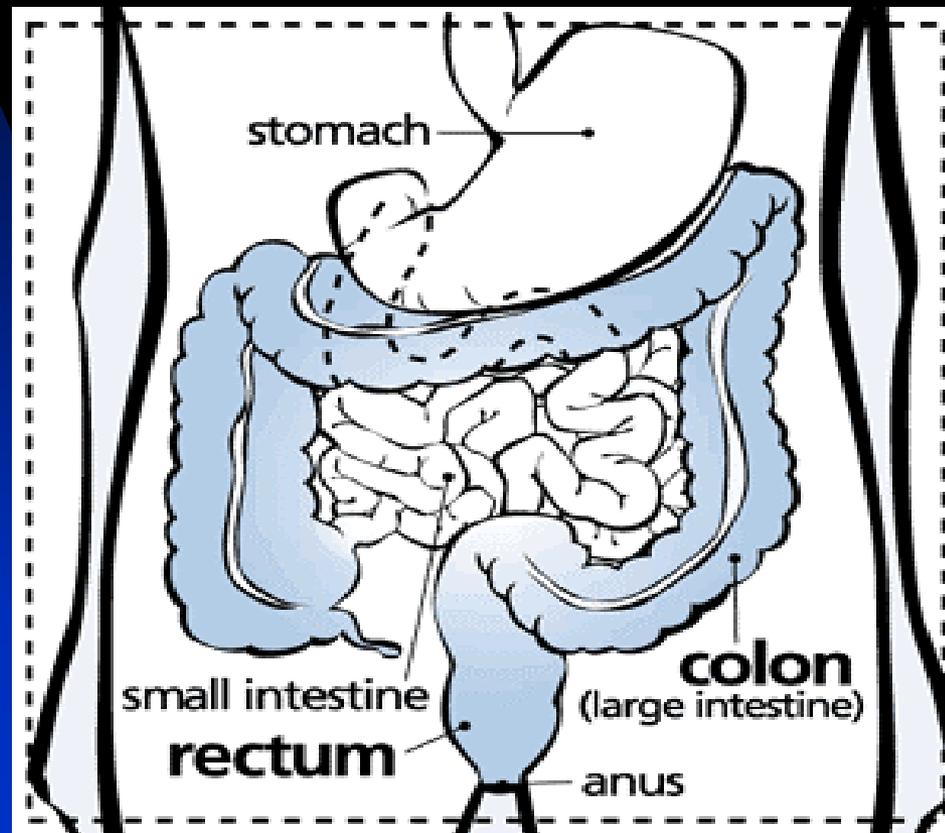


VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York

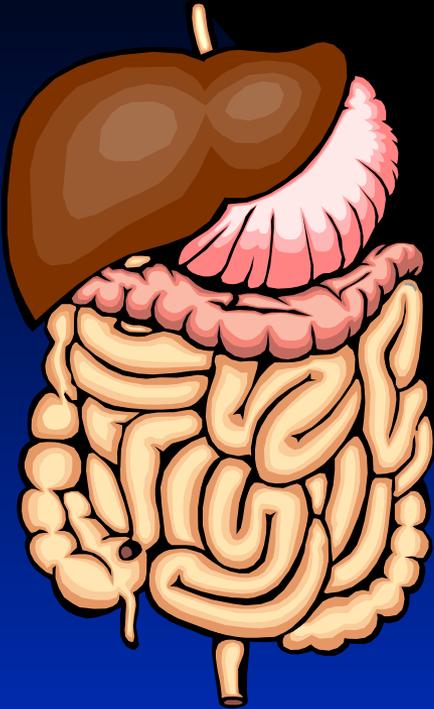
Endoscopy



Colorectal cancer is cancer that occurs in the colon or rectum. The colon is the large intestine or large bowel. The rectum is the passageway connecting the colon to the anus.



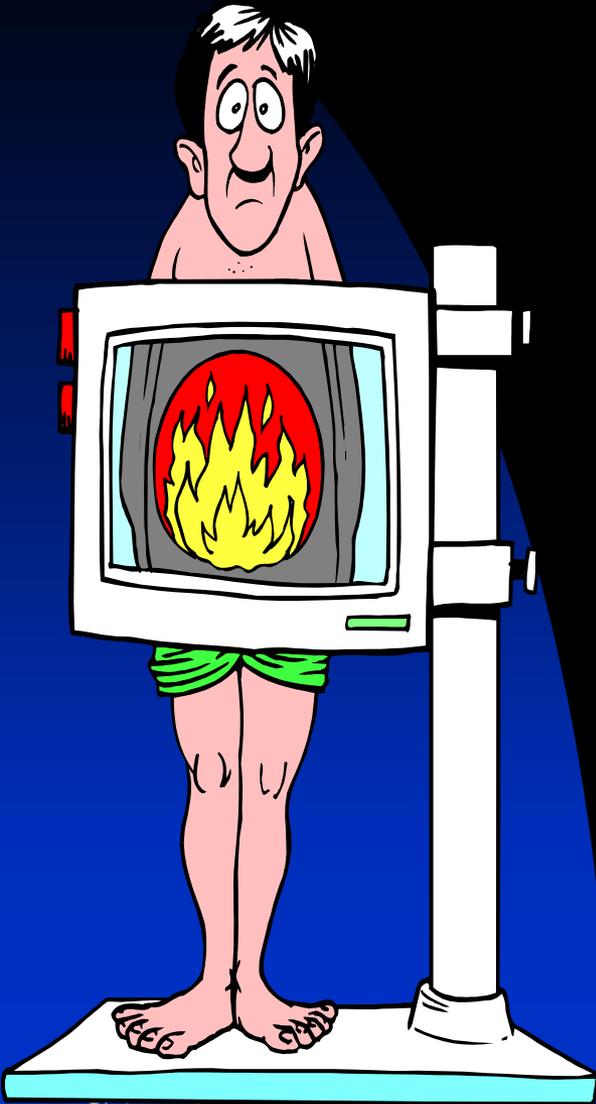
COLORECTAL CANCER



Colorectal cancer is the second most common cancer in the United States striking 140,000 people annually.

That's a staggering figure when you consider the disease is potentially curable if diagnosed in the early stages.

WHO IS AT RISK?



Though colorectal cancer can occur at any age, more than 90% occur after age 40. At that point the risk doubles every ten years.

In addition to age , other risk factors include a family history of colorectal polyps and a personal history of ulcerative colitis, colon polyps or cancer of other organs, especially of the breast or uterus.

Screening Saves Lives

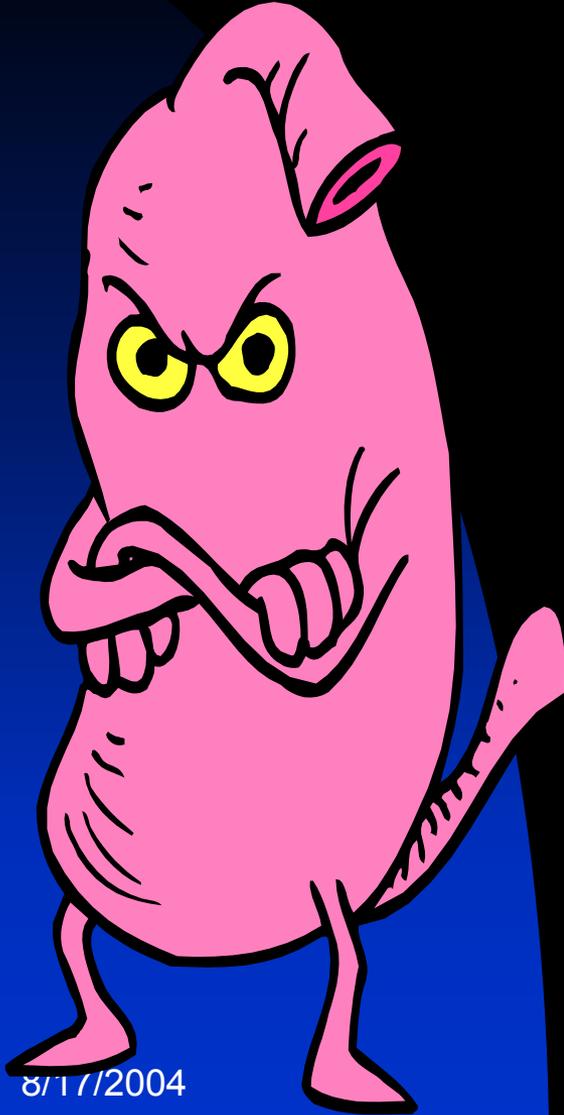
If you're 50 or older, getting a screening test for colorectal cancer could save your life. Here's how:

Colorectal cancer usually starts from polyps in the colon or rectum. A polyp is a growth that shouldn't be there.

- Over time, some polyps can turn into cancer.
- Screening tests can find polyps, so they can be removed *before* they turn into cancer.
- Screening tests can also find colorectal cancer early, when the chance of being cured is good.



HOW DOES IT START?



It is generally believed that all colon and rectal cancer begins in benign polyps. These pre-malignant growths occur on the bowel wall and may eventually increase in size and become cancer.

Removal of benign polyps is one aspect of preventative medicine that really works!

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

The most common symptom is rectal bleeding and changes in bowel habits, such as diarrhea and constipation. Abdominal pain and weight loss are usually late symptoms indicating possible extensive disease.

Unfortunately, many polyps and early cancers fail to produce symptoms. Therefore, it is important that your routine physical include a colorectal cancer detection procedures once you reach age 40.

Diagnostic Tests For Those Of Average Risk

If you are at Average Risk of Colorectal Cancer, it is recommended that persons over 50 undergo the following:

- An Annual Fecal Occult Blood Test
- A Flexible Sigmoidoscopy every 5 years
- A Colonoscopy every 10 years (age 60 and older)

A positive screening should be followed by an appropriate and complete diagnostic evaluation.

Diagnostic Test (description)

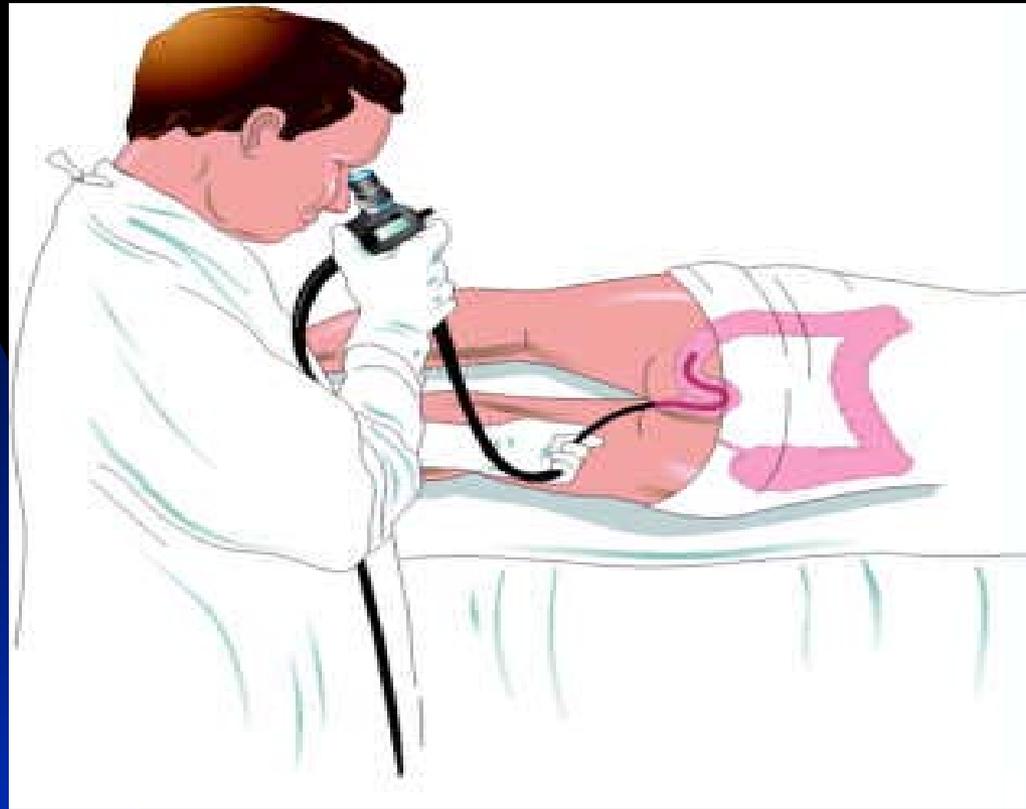
- Fecal Occult Blood Test: It is used to detect microscopic blood in the stool and is a screening tool for colorectal cancer.

- Flexible Sigmoidoscopy: a procedure by which a doctor inserts either a short and flexible fiber-optic tube into the rectum to examine the lower portion of the large intestine (or bowel).

- Colonoscopy: a medical procedure where a long, flexible, tubular instrument called the colonoscope is used to view the entire inner lining of the colon (large intestine) and the rectum.

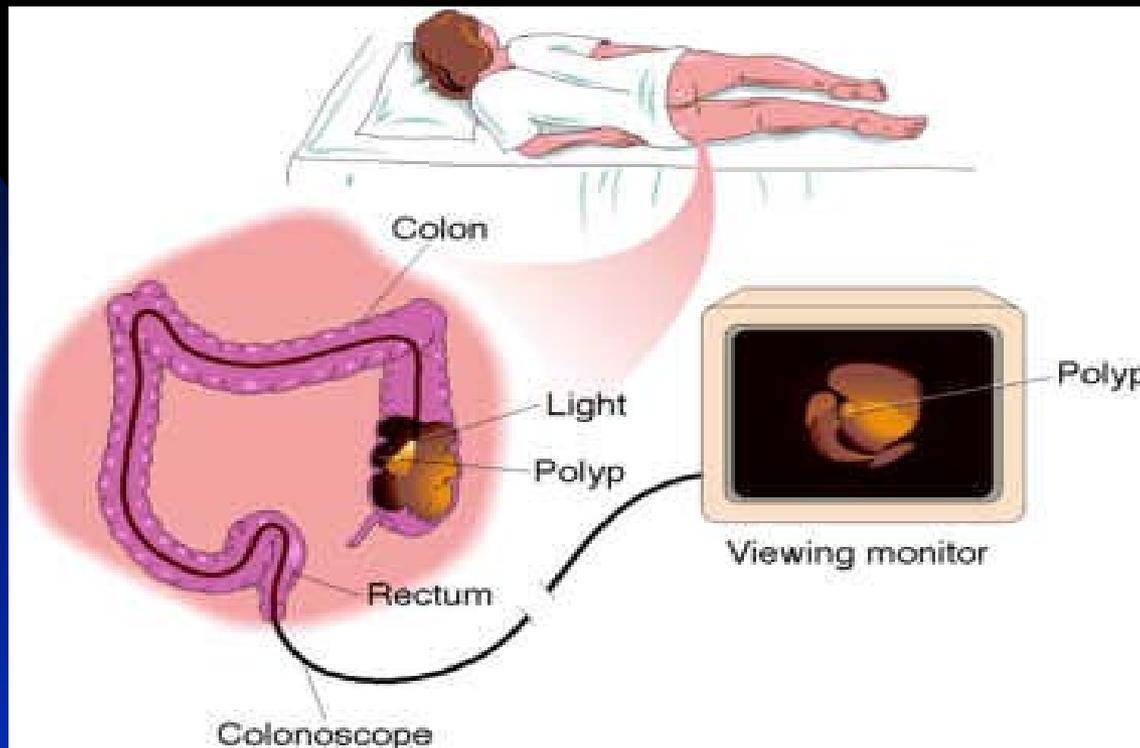
*(Not all facilities have the equipment to offer every type of screening. Ask your doctor or nurse what is available and what is right for you)

Flexible Sigmoidoscopy



Sigmoidoscopy is a procedure most often used in screening for colorectal cancer and as a test in diagnosis of possible inflammatory bowel disease. As illustrated above, the physician can view the rectum and colon through a sigmoidoscope, a 12 inch (30 cm) or 24 inch (60 cm) flexible fiber-optic tube which contains a light source and a lens.

Colonoscopy



Colonoscopy is a procedure where a long and flexible tubular instrument called a colonoscope is inserted into the patient's anus in order to view the lining of the colon and rectum. It is performed to test for colorectal cancer and other bowel diseases and enables the physician to collect tissue samples for laboratory analysis.

Diagnostic Tests For Those of Increased Risk

If you are at Increased Risk of Colorectal Cancer, especially because of family history of Colorectal Cancer or Polyps, it is also recommended the following:

- Begin colorectal screening 10 years before the youngest case of the disease in the immediate family.
- Have a total evaluation double contrast colon x-ray and Flexible Sigmoidoscopy or a Colonoscopy.

Links to the Web

- [Animated Guide to the Digestive System | Building Better Health](#)