

# PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET



COUNTY MICHIGAN  
HEALTH DIVISION

Department of Health & Human Services

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## Colorectal Cancer

### What is Colorectal Cancer?

Colorectal cancer is a disease of the lower digestive tract. It can affect either the colon or the rectum. Colorectal cancer is one of the most commonly diagnosed cancers in the United States.

### What are the Symptoms of Colorectal Cancer?

- Change in bowel habits
- Feeling that the bowel does not empty completely
- Blood in or on the stool
- Narrow ribbon-like stools
- General abdominal discomfort
- Weight loss
- Fatigue
- Frequent gas or pains

### What are the Risk Factors for Colorectal Cancer?

- Age, 50 years and older
- Diet that is low in fiber and high in fat
- Family history
- Personal medical history
- Benign growths along the colon wall (Polyps)
- Sedentary life style
- High alcohol intake
- High red meat and processed meat intake



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## How is Colorectal Cancer Detected?

- Digital Rectal Exam (DRE)- with lubricated gloved finger inserted into the rectum; a healthcare provider feels for any abnormalities.
- Fecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT)- a test that checks for blood in the stool.
- Flexible Sigmoidoscopy- the healthcare provider uses a flexible hollow lighted tube to view the rectum and part of the colon.
- Colonoscopy- similar to the sigmoidoscopy procedure, except the tube is long enough to view the whole colon.
- Double contrast barium enema (DCBE)- a series of x-rays of the colon and rectum. An enema with a solution that contains barium is given. This outlines the colon and rectum on the x-rays.

## How can the Risk of Colorectal Cancer be Reduced?

- Exercise to maintain a healthy weight
- Eat limited amounts of red meat
- Maintain a high fiber, low fat diet
- Daily folic acid intake through diet or multivitamin

## How can Colorectal Cancer be Treated?

- Surgery - removal of the tumor
- Chemotherapy - use of anticancer drugs to kill cancer cells
- Radiation therapy - use of high energy x-rays to kill cancer cells

The best treatment for you needs to be determined by you and your health care provider.

**For more information on Colorectal Cancer, call (248) 858-1406 or toll free 1 (800) 848-5533.**

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