Online Resources

Your Disease Risk
yourdiseaserisk.wustl.edu

Zuum—Health Tracker
zuum.wustl.edu

8 Ways to Prevent Cancer
the8ways.org

SmokeFree.gov
smokefree.gov

Surgeon General—My Family Health Portrait
familyhistory.hhs.gov

NIH—Body Mass Index Calculator
tinyurl.com/nhbibmi

National Cancer Institute
cancer.gov

American Cancer Society
cancer.org

American Indian Cancer Foundation
americanindiancancer.org

Siteman Cancer Center Locations

Washington University Medical Campus
4921 Parkview Place
St. Louis, MO 63110

St. Charles County
150 Entrance Way
St. Peters, MO 63376

North St. Louis County
11125 Dunn Road, Suite 100
St. Louis, MO 63136

West St. Louis County
10 Barnes West Drive, Physician Office Building, 2
Creve Coeur, MO 63141

South St. Louis County
5225 Midamerica Plaza
St. Louis, MO 63129

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SITEMAN CANCER CENTER
A NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTER

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Colon cancer can be prevented. Seventy-five percent of all cases could be avoided by things you can do. American Indians and Alaska Natives face some of the worst health outcomes in the US, one being colon cancer.

Use these eight tips as a guide to lowering your risk. Start with one or two and build from there. It's your health. Take control.

1. Get screened
   Getting regular screening tests for colon cancer is the single best way to protect yourself from the disease. It can catch cancer early, when it’s most treatable, and help prevent the disease by finding abnormal growths called polyps that can turn into cancer. There are a number of effective screening tests for colon cancer. Which test you have depends on your personal preferences and medical history. A doctor can help you decide. Most people should begin getting tested at age 50. Getting regular screening tests for colon cancer is the single best way to protect yourself from the disease. It can catch cancer early, when it’s most treatable, and help prevent the disease by finding abnormal growths called polyps that can turn into cancer. There are a number of effective screening tests for colon cancer. Which test you have depends on your personal preferences and medical history. A doctor can help you decide. Most people should begin getting tested at age 50.

   **CHOOSE ONE RECOMMENDED SCREENING OPTION.**
   If a test finds anything suspicious, a follow-up colonoscopy is usually needed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>How often:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colonoscopy</td>
<td>every 10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible sigmoidoscopy</td>
<td>every 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual colonoscopy</td>
<td>every 5 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   A small flexible tube with a camera at the end is used to examine the full length of the inside of the colon. You are sedated for the test, so you need a ride home afterward. If the exam finds polyps or other suspicious growths, they can be removed during the test.

   OR

   An exam similar to a colonoscopy that uses a small flexible tube to examine the lower part of the colon (the sigmoid). You don’t need to be sedate for the sigmoidoscopy.

   OR

   A type of CT scan that creates a precise 3D image of the inside of the colon. The scan itself takes just a few minutes.

2. Maintain a healthy weight
   At least 11 different cancers have been linked to weight gain and obesity, including colon cancer. If you’ve put on weight, the first goal is to slowly work to lose some pounds.

3. Don’t smoke
   Tobacco has a traditional spiritual and medicinal role in many Native cultures. It is, however, important to recognize the health dangers with smoking cigarettes. On top of raising the risk of serious diseases like heart disease, stroke, and emphysema, smoking is a major cause of at least 14 different cancers, including colon cancer. If you do smoke, quitting has real benefits, which start shortly after your last cigarette. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW or visit smokefree.gov for help. Talking to a doctor can double your chances of success. Respect your cultures – keep tobacco sacred.

4. Be physically active
   Regular activity lowers the risk of many serious diseases, including colon cancer, and provides a good mental boost. Any amount of physical activity is better than none, but it’s good to shoot for around 30 minutes or more of moderate activity each day.

5. Don’t drink alcohol
   Alcohol is a strange thing when it comes to health. Drinking alcohol can up the risk of colon and other cancers at even low levels.

6. Limit red meat, especially processed meat
   Eating too much red meat – like steak, hamburger, and pork – increases the risk of colon cancer. And processed meats – like bacon, sausage, and bologna – raise risk even more. Try to eat no more than three servings each week. Less is even better. Traditional foods, such as fish and venison, are healthier options.

7. Get enough calcium and vitamin D
   There is good evidence that getting enough calcium and vitamin D can help protect against colon cancer. Shoot for 1000 IU per day of vitamin D. Some groups recommend testing for vitamin D deficiency, especially those at increased risk of low levels – such as those living in northern parts of the country as well as the elderly, very overweight, and people with darker skin.

8. Consider a multivitamin with folate
   A daily multivitamin can help give your diet a boost and also help protect against colon cancer. Multivitamins have calcium and vitamin D. They also contain folate, which has been shown in studies to lower the risk of colon cancer. Avoid megadose vitamins. A standard multivitamin is all you need.

   **What about aspirin?**
   For most men ages 45–85 years old and women ages 55 to 85 years old, a daily low-dose aspirin is recommended to lower the risk of heart attack. And there is good evidence that long-term use of aspirin can also lower the risk of colon cancer. Aspirin can have some important risks, however, so it’s important to talk to a doctor before taking it regularly.

Other important risk factors for colon cancer
Though colon cancer is very preventable, there are still a number of important risk factors that people can’t control. Knowing which ones apply to you can help you understand your risk and take steps to lower it. If you feel you’re at high risk, talk to a doctor or health professional. These can increase colon cancer risk:

- Older age, especially 60 years or over
- Family history of colon cancer
- Inflammatory bowel disease
- Being tall (5’8” or taller for women; 5’11” or taller for men)

Know Your Risk. Change Your Future.
Visit yourdiseaserisk.wustl.edu and, with just a few clicks, get a personal estimate of your colon cancer risk and custom prevention tips.