Colon Cancer: What You Should Know

Colon cancer, or colorectal cancer, develops when cells in the colon or rectum grow out of control. In the U.S., colon cancer is the third most common cancer in men and women. It is also the third leading cause of cancer-related deaths, but it doesn’t have to be. Screenings can help find precancerous polyps (abnormal growths) before they turn into cancer and can help find cancer at an early stage (when cancer is most treatable).

What should you do?
Talk to your doctor about getting tested and what screening test is best for you. Get screened regularly if you are 45 to 75, as recommended for average-risk individuals. If you are at high-risk, talk to your doctor about when you should begin screenings and how often you should be screened.

What are the risk factors for colon cancer?
- Age 45 and older
- A personal or family history of colon cancer or colorectal polyps
- Having inflammatory bowel disease, Crohn’s disease, or ulcerative colitis
- Being overweight
- Lack of regular physical activity
- A diet low in fruits and vegetables
- A low-fiber and high-fat diet, or a diet high in processed meats
- Alcohol consumption
- Tobacco use

How to reduce your risk
Follow a healthy lifestyle: Exercise, eat a balanced diet, maintain a healthy weight, limit alcohol and don’t use tobacco.

Remember, Health Advocate offers resources to help you and your family stay healthy!