



## Colorectal Cancer Risk Factors

A risk factor is anything that affects the chances of getting a disease. Different cancers have different risk factors. The presence or absence of risk factors doesn't always indicate whether one will or will not get the disease. That said, the links between diet, weight and exercise to colorectal cancer are more strongly associated than in any other type of cancer.

### Lifestyle / Factors That Can Be Changed:

- **Diets High in Red & Processed Meats** – Includes items such as beef, pork, lamb, liver, hot dogs and some luncheon meats. Cooking meat at very high temperatures (frying, broiling, or grilling) creates chemicals that might increase risk. Diets high in vegetables, fruits, and whole grains have been linked with a decreased risk of the disease, but fiber supplements do not seem to help.
- **Physical Inactivity**
- **Obesity** – It raises the risk of colon cancer in both men and women, but the link seems to be stronger in men.
- **Smoking** - Smoking is a well-known cause of lung cancer, but it is also linked to other cancers, including colorectal.
- **Heavy Alcohol Use** - Limiting alcohol use to no more than two (2) drinks a day for men and one (1) drink a day for women has many health benefits, including a lower risk of colorectal cancer.

### Factors That Can't Be Changed:

- **Age** – Younger adults can develop colorectal cancer, but chances increase markedly after 50; nine (9) out of 10 people diagnosed are at least 50 years old.
- **Racial / Ethnic Background** – African Americans have the highest colorectal cancer incidence and mortality rates in the U.S. Louisiana Cajuns have recently been shown to have some of the highest incidence rates in the country. And Jews of Eastern European descent (Ashkenazi Jews) have one of the highest colorectal cancer rates in the world, due to gene mutations.
- **Type 2 Diabetes**
- **Personal/Family History of Polyps and Colorectal Cancer**
- **Personal History of Inflammatory Bowel Disease**
- **Inherited Syndromes** - Familial Adenomatous (FAP), Hereditary Non-Polyposis Colon Cancer (HNPCC), Turcot Syndrome, Peutz-Jeghers Syndrome, MUTYH-Associated Polyposis.

