

Colorectal cancer awareness

Colorectal cancer starts in the inner lining of the rectum or colon. The cancers are grouped together because they have many of the same features. Here are some facts about colorectal cancer:

- Colorectal cancer begins as polyps, or growths that may change into cancer over time. Less common cancers start in the digestive tract, connective tissues or lymph nodes.
- One in three Americans aren't up-to-date with their colorectal cancer screenings, but 60% of deaths from colorectal cancer could be prevented with screenings and early detection.
- If you have a first-degree relative who has this type of cancer, you have two to three times the risk of developing the disease.
- Incidences are dropping for people older than 50, possibly because of a large increase in testing.
- Incidences are rising for people younger than 50 and now account for one in 10 cases. This may be due to a lack of education about symptoms or access to health care.



One in 23 Americans are at risk for developing colorectal cancer over their lifetimes. Some risks factors can't be changed, such as age, family history and racial or ethnic background. There are also some lifestyle risks that increase chances for colorectal cancer:

- Being overweight or obese
- Physical inactivity
- A diet high in red meat and processed meats
- Smoking
- Heavy alcohol use
- Type 2 diabetes

If you or others on your team have any of these factors, you need to be aware of symptoms, such as:

- A change in bowel habits
- Persistent abdominal pain or discomfort
- Blood in the stool
- Weakness or fatigue accompanied by unexplained weight loss

You can support employees who have colorectal cancer, or who are caring for a loved one with colorectal cancer, through flexible leave options, medical coverage, well-being programs, an employee assistance program and workplace accommodations.

March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. Here are some ways you can raise awareness of this disease:

- Wear blue
- Address lifestyle risks
- Participate in a walk or run that raises funds for cancer research
- Hold a lunch and learn
- Use traditional communications

Sources: cancer.org*, ccalliance.org*

*Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network don't own or control these websites.