
Sekou RS Rawlins, MD, FACP
March 26, 2019
What is colon cancer?

- A cancer that starts in the colon or the rectum
- Cancer starts when the cells in the body grow out of control, can spread to other areas of the body
Where does cancer start?

- Most cancers start as growths on the inner lining called a polyp.
What does the colon do?

- A 5 foot long muscular tube
- Absorbs water and salt from the remaining food matter after it passes through the small intestines
How much colon cancer is there?

- **136,830** people diagnosed with CRC in 2014
- **50,310** people die of colon cancer annually
- Fourth most commonly diagnosed cancer, second leading cause of cancer death
- Both **incidence and death rates have declined** in the past decade
  - Why? Increased colonoscopy use
- Incidence and mortality rates 25% and 50% higher in **African Americans** than Whites
  - Also high risk in Ashkenazi Jews
  - Lower in other ethnic groups
Who gets colon cancer?

- 4.4% for women
- 4.7% for men
- Usually adults over 50
**FIGURE 1.** Trends in Colorectal Cancer Incidence Rates in Adults Younger Than Age 50 Years by Race, 1975 to 2014.
What increases the risk for colon cancer?

**Avoidable risks**
- Overweight/obese
- Physical inactivity
- Diet high in red meat
- Fried, grilled, broiled meats
- Low in vegetables, fruits, whole grains
- Smoking
- Heavy alcohol use

**Unavoidable risks**
- Being older
- Personal history of colorectal polyps or colorectal cancer
- Personal history of inflammatory bowel disease
- Family history of colorectal cancer or polyps
- Inherited cancer syndromes
- Type 2 diabetes
When does family history matter?

- Family history of cancer or polyps
- Family cancer syndromes
  - Familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP)
  - Gardner syndrome
  - Lynch syndrome
  - Turcot syndrome
  - Peutz-Jeghers syndrome
  - MUTYH-associated polyposis
What if nobody else in my family has colon cancer?

- Most cancers aren’t heritable
  - Your risk is likely average
What if my personal risk is very low?

- Then your risk is average (not negligible)
What if people in my family never get cancer?

- Congratulations! Your risk is average!
What if I don’t want to get screened for colon cancer?

- Then accept the small *(but real)* risk of a *(completely preventable)* cancer
Is there a cure?

- Prevention through polypectomy
- Surgery
- Adjunctive radiation therapy
- [Chemotherapy for metastatic disease]
Colon cancer surgeries
Can it be prevented?

- Yes. That’s why we do screening tests.
What is a screening test?

- A test that helps to identify people with increased risk for a disease before they have symptoms
- This is the core of preventive health care
Available Screening Options

- Colonoscopy
- Fecal Immunochemical Testing (FIT)
- Fecal Occult Blood Testing (FOBT)
- Cologuard (Stool DNA)
- Flexible Sigmoidoscopy
- Computed Tomographic (CT) Colonography
- Barium Enema (BE)
Colonoscopy

- What?
- How?
- Where?
- Will it hurt?
- How often?
FIT

- What?
- How?
- Where?
- Will it hurt?
- How often?
FOBT

- What?
- How?
- Where?
- Will it hurt?
- How often?
Stool DNA

- What?
- How?
- Where?
- Will it hurt?
- How often?
Flexible Sigmoidoscopy

- What?
- How?
- Where?
- Will it hurt?
- How often?
CT Colonography

- What?
- How?
- Where?
- Will it hurt?
- How often?
Barium Enema

- What?
- How?
- Where?
- Will it hurt?
- How often?
Is there a good reason NOT to get screened for CRC?
Questions?
Thank You!!