



National Behavioral Health Network

for Tobacco & Cancer Control

from NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR MENTAL WELLBEING

Know the Facts — Colorectal Cancer and Mental Wellbeing

Mental health challenges affect individuals in all stages of cancer, whether a pre-existing condition, during treatment, while in remission and often throughout the life course.

- One in four adults will experience a mental health or substance use challenge during their lifetime.
- People with mental health challenges, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and disabling depression, are 2.6 times more likely to develop cancer than the general population.

People with mental health and substance challenges are more at risk of developing cancer due to:

- Behavioral and lifestyle factors (smoking, alcohol use, nutrition access, diet).
- Socio-environmental circumstances (housing insecurity, stigma, low socio-economic status).
- Access to and quality of medical care (cost of care, provider availability, provider bias).
- Bio-chemical factors (co-morbidities, drug interactions, genetics).
- Contextual inequities (food environments, poverty, discrimination).

Why mental health care is colorectal cancer care.

- One in five people with colorectal cancer have been diagnosed with depression.
- 37% of colorectal survivors report symptoms of anxiety or depression.
- Mental health status is a barrier to colorectal screening – individuals with mental health and substance use challenges have much lower rates of colorectal screening compared to the general population.
- Positive mental health is associated with greater likelihood of receiving/seeking colorectal screening.
- Colorectal cancer survivors are at greater risk for developing a mental health challenge.





[colon polyps]

small clump of cells that grows on the surface of the colon

What is colorectal cancer?

Colorectal cancers start as non-cancerous growths on the inner lining of the colon or rectum. These growths are called polyps and can become cancerous. Colorectal cancer is the third most diagnosed cancer in both men and women in the United States and the second leading overall cause of cancer deaths.

Colorectal Cancer Symptoms - Know These 7 Signs

1. Changes in bowel habits that lasts for more than a few days.
2. A feeling that you need to have a bowel movement that's not relieved by having one.
3. Rectal bleeding with bright red blood.
4. Blood in the stool, which might make the stool look dark brown or black.
5. Cramping, abdominal or bloating pain.
6. Weakness and fatigue.
7. Unexplained weight loss.

Know Your Risk for Colorectal Cancer



Being older than 50 years of age.

Your risk of colorectal cancer goes up as you age, however this cancer is rising among people who are younger than age 50 and the reason for this remains unclear.



A diet low in fiber and high in fat and processed meats.



Inflammatory bowel disease.



Overweight and obesity.



Family history of colorectal cancer or polyps.



Alcohol consumption.



Genetics.



Tobacco use.



Lack of physical activity.

Get Screened

Colorectal cancer almost always develops from precancerous polyps in the colon or rectum. Screening tests can find precancerous polyps so that they can be removed before they turn into cancer or find it early when treatment works best.

For more information, check out the [American Cancer Society's Guideline for Colorectal Cancer Screening](#).

Resources

- [National Behavioral Health Network for Tobacco and Cancer Control](#)
- [Fight Colorectal Cancer](#)
- [American Cancer Society](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [Colorectal Cancer Alliance](#)
- [Cancer Support Community](#)
- [Cancer.Net](#)
- [American Psychological Association Center for Psychology and Health](#)

