



What is Colorectal Cancer?

Next to skin cancer, colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer found in both men and women in the United States.

Colorectal cancer means cancer of the colon, rectum or both. The colon and rectum are components of the large intestine. The first 6 feet of the large intestine make up your colon, and the last 8 to 10 inches form your rectum.

The American Cancer Society estimates that in 2008 there were 108,070 new cases of colon cancer and 40,740 new cases of rectal cancer in the United States.

Colorectal cancer often starts as a polyp, which is a growth of tissue in the colon or rectum. If a polyp is found early, a surgeon can easily remove it. However, if the polyp becomes a cancerous tumor, it can grow and spread in the body.

The good news is the death rate from colorectal cancer is decreasing thanks to advanced colorectal cancer screening. If found, many polyps may be removed before they ever turn into cancer.