



COLON CANCER – WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW!

COLONOSCOPY SAVES LIVES

Colon cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in Nevada. Among non-smokers, it is number one. Colonoscopy is the best test for colon cancer and the only one that can prevent the disease by removing tumors (polyps) before they become cancerous. There are other colon cancer tests. Although not as effective as a colonoscopy, any test is better than no test at all.

FACTS:

- Each year approximately 1,000 Nevadans will be diagnosed with colon cancer and almost 400 will die from the disease.
- Colon cancer can almost always be prevented or cured if found early.
- More than 90 percent of colon cancer happens in people age 50 and older.
- About 25 percent of people age 50 and older have colon polyps, which can become cancer.
- People with a family history of colon cancer should get a colonoscopy before age 50.
- Colonoscopy examines the entire colon. It is safe, generally lasts about 30 minutes, is usually painless, and is typically only needed once every five to 10 years.
- Men and women age 50 and older covered by Medicare can get a screening colonoscopy once every 10 years.

RISK FACTORS:

Anyone can develop colorectal cancer; however, there are known risk factors:

Highest Risk Factors

- Being age 50 or older
- Family history of colon cancer

Other Risk Factors

- Smoking
- Physical inactivity
- Overweight or obesity
- Diet high in fat and low in fiber
- African American or Ashkenazi (Eastern Europe) Jewish ancestry
- Having ulcerative colitis or Crohn's Disease

REDUCING YOUR RISK:

The best ways to lower your risk of colon cancer are:

- Don't smoke and avoid secondhand smoke
- Exercise regularly (at least 30 minutes four days each week)
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Eat a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables everyday

The following may reduce your risk for colon cancer:

- Daily multivitamin with folate
- Limit alcohol intake (no more than one drink a day)
- Ask your doctor about taking a daily 81mg aspirin tablet

SCREENING RECOMMENDATIONS:

Beginning at **age 50**, both men and women should follow one of these five testing schedules:

- Yearly fecal occult blood test (FOBT), plus flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years
- Flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years
- FOBT every year
- Colonoscopy every 10 years
- Double-contrast barium enema every five years

All positive tests should be followed up with a colonoscopy.