

# About Colorectal Cancer



Colorectal cancer develops in the colon and/or rectum. The colon is the large intestine or large bowel. The rectum is the section at the end of the large intestine.

## Risk Factors

- Increasing age
- Colorectal polyps
- Overweight and obesity
- Family history of colorectal cancer
- Long-term smoking
- Chronic inflammatory conditions of the colon such as ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease
- Type 2 Diabetes

## Colorectal Cancer in North Carolina

Colorectal cancer was the second leading cause of cancer deaths in North Carolina in 2012 (8.3%).<sup>1</sup> It was estimated that 4,746 people in North Carolina would be diagnosed with colorectal cancer and 1,665 people in North Carolina would die from colorectal cancer in 2014.<sup>2</sup>

## Colorectal Cancer Prevention

Colorectal cancer is largely preventable. Screening tests include:

- Colonoscopy – An exam used to detect changes or abnormalities in the colon. This test can find polyps which can be removed before they become cancer.
- Fecal blood tests - Fecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT) and Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) and
- Sigmoidoscopy. An exam used to detect changes or abnormalities in the lower part of the colon. This test can find polyps which can be removed before they become cancer.

It is estimated that 40 out of every 100 deaths from late stage colorectal cancer are preventable if all adults aged 50 and older were routinely screened.

While colorectal cancer risk increases with age, lifestyle choices can significantly reduce the overall risk of colorectal cancer. According to the American Institute for Cancer Research, 50 percent of the estimated cases of colorectal cancer in the United States are preventable by diet, physical activity and weight management. <sup>2</sup>

## Signs and Symptoms of Colorectal Cancer

- Blood in your stool or rectal bleeding
- Stomach pain, aches or cramps that do not go away
- Unexplained weight loss

<sup>1</sup> State Center for Health Statistics, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. North Carolina Central Cancer Registry. *Statistics and Reports: Cancer*. <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/data/cancer.cfm>

<sup>2</sup> State Center for Health Statistics, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. North Carolina Central Cancer Registry. *Projected New Cancer Cases and Deaths For All Sites, 2014*. <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/schs/CCR/proj14site.pdf>

