

Colorectal cancer (CRC) is a term that is used to refer to cancer that develops in the colon or the rectum.¹ The death rate from CRC has been declining in recent years, due to increased screening and improved treatments.¹ When CRC is found early, the survival rate is high. However, only 40 percent of CRC cases are found early.¹

Facts and Figures

- Worldwide, it was estimated that nearly 1.2 million new cases of CRC were diagnosed in 2007.²
- CRC is the fourth most common cancer in men and the third most common in women worldwide.²
- Globally, about 630,000 deaths from CRC were estimated to occur in 2007, accounting for 8 percent of all cancer deaths.²
- Nearly 150,000 new cases of CRC are expected to occur in the United States in 2009, and nearly 50,000 people are expected to die from the disease.³
- In the United States, CRC is the third most common cancer and the third leading cause of cancer death in men and women.¹
- Approximately 90 percent of CRC cases are diagnosed after the age of 50.¹
- When the cancer is confined to the colon or rectum,¹ the five-year survival for CRC may be as high as 90 percent.¹
- The five-year survival rate is 68 percent¹ for CRC patients whose disease has spread to the lymph nodes and adjacent tissues.¹
- Five-year survival rates for patients with metastatic disease, cancer that has spread to distant parts of the body, such as the liver, are much lower, around 11 percent.¹

Risk Factors

Although the exact cause of CRC is not known, researchers have found several risk factors that may increase a person's chance of developing the disease.⁴

- **Family history and genetics:** People with a strong family history of CRC have a higher chance of developing this cancer. People with certain genetic conditions including familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP), which involves hundreds of polyps in the colon or rectum, tend to develop CRC. Other bowel conditions may also increase the risk, such as ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease. Also, although the reason has not yet been established, African Americans and Jews of Eastern European descent (Ashkenazi Jews) appear to have a higher CRC risk.⁴
- **Diet:** A diet that is high in red meats and processed meats can increase CRC risk. Cooking meats at very high heat can create chemicals that might increase the risk.⁴
- **Weight:** Being very overweight increases a person's risk of dying from CRC.⁴
- **Smoking:** Long-time smokers are more likely than non-smokers to die from CRC.⁴
- **Alcohol:** Heavy use of alcohol has been linked to CRC.⁴
- **Diabetes:** People with type 2 diabetes have an increased chance of getting CRC and have a higher death rate from this cancer.⁴

Diagnosis and Treatment

- The main symptom of CRC is a change in bowel habits, which can include diarrhea or constipation, a feeling that the bowel does not empty completely, blood in the stool, narrow stool, and frequent gas pains or cramps. In addition, weight loss, fatigue, nausea and vomiting are also symptoms of CRC.⁵
- There are several tests available to diagnose CRC including colonoscopy, biopsy, blood tests and imaging tests, such as a CT scan.⁶
- Surgery is the most common treatment for CRC.⁷
- Other common types of treatment include radiation therapy, chemotherapy and targeted therapies.⁷
- Depending on the stage of the cancer, two or more types of treatment may be used at the same time, or used one after the other.⁸

For additional information, please visit: <http://www.pfizer.com/asco>.

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- ¹ American Cancer Society. Colorectal Cancer Facts and Figures 2008-2010. Available at: http://www.cancer.org/downloads/STT/F861708_finalforweb.pdf. Accessed April 22, 2009. .
- ² American Cancer Society. Global Cancer Facts and Figures 2007. Available at: http://www.cancer.org/downloads/STT/Global_Cancer_Facts_and_Figures_2007.pdf . Accessed April 27, 2009.
- ³ American Cancer Society. Cancer Facts and Figures 2009. Available at: <http://www.cancer.org/downloads/STT/500809web.pdf>. Accessed May 5, 2009.
- ⁴ American Cancer Society. Detailed Guide: Colon and Rectum Cancer- What Are The Risk Factors for Colorectal Cancer? Available at: http://www.cancer.org/docroot/CRI/content/CRI_2_4_2X_What_are_the_risk_factors_for_colon_and_rectum_cancer.asp?rnav=cri . Accessed April 28,2009.
- ⁵ National Cancer Institute. What You Need To Know About Cancer of the Colon and Rectum- Symptoms. Available at: <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/wyntk/colon-and-rectal/page6>. Accessed April 28, 2009.
- ⁶ Cancer.net. Colorectal Cancer – Diagnosis. Available at: <http://www.cancer.net/patient/Cancer+Types/Colorectal+Cancer>. Accessed on April 22, 2009.
- ⁷ Cancer.net. Colorectal Cancer- Treatment. Available at: <http://www.cancer.net/patient/Cancer+Types/Colorectal+Cancer> . Accessed April 28, 2009.
- ⁸ American Cancer Society. How is Colorectal cancer treated? Available at: http://www.cancer.org/docroot/CRI/content/CRI_2_4_4x_How_is_colorectal_cancer_treated_10.asp?rnav=cri. Accessed on April 22, 2009.

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