



a community for healthy ideas

Do-It-Yourself Health: Colorectal Cancer Awareness, March 2018



Health & Wellness

By Gregory Byrnes

March 1 2018

Can you remember when your family got its first color TV? And when most families had one car and one phone — which had a cord? Then you're probably in the age group (50 and older) that should be tested for colon cancer.

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths — after lung cancer — in the U.S. Both men and women are at risk for colon cancer. Fortunately, colon cancer is one of the most preventable diseases with regular screenings and a healthy lifestyle. In fact, one recent study estimated that more than half of colorectal cancers (and about 40 percent of all cancer cases) are preventable through a healthy lifestyle. With that in mind, here are five DIY Health actions you can take to decrease your risk of colon cancer.

Get Your Screening

Getting a recommended colon cancer screening may be the most important thing you can do to lower your risk of dying from colorectal cancer. The recommended age is 50; however, if you have a family history or other risk factors, your doctor may recommend a screening earlier. A screening can detect colon cancer in the early, localized stage, when it has a 90 percent survival rate — so don't let fear, embarrassment or anything else cause you

to avoid a recommended screening. You may also be interested to learn that a [colonoscopy](#) is just one of [several types of screenings](#). Talk with your doctor about when you should get screened, and which screening is best for you. You may also want to check your health plan coverage as part of your decision-making process.

Eat a Plant-Based Diet That's Rich in Fiber

Diet plays an important role in many areas of health — and when it comes to reducing the risk of colorectal cancer, you want that diet to be mostly plant-based and rich in fiber. Strive for 5 servings (2.5 cups) of fruits and vegetables a day, and make at least half of your grain choices, like bread or pasta, whole grain. Reduce your meat intake, especially red meat. Instead, try plant-based proteins like beans, legumes, lentils and peas a few times a week. These provide your body with the protein you need, without the unnecessary saturated fats, and they are great sources of fiber. Our [Eat for Health recipes and grocery list](#) will get you moving in the right direction!

[Black Bean Burgers](#)

Video Player

00:00
01:19

[Minty Pear Cooler](#) (based on a recipe from HealWithFood.org)

[Rice Pudding with Blueberry Sauce](#) (based on a recipe from HealWithFood.org)

[Curried Sweet Potato Soup](#) (based on a recipe from HealWithFood.org)

[Shrimp and Mushroom Risotto](#) (based on a recipe from HealWithFood.org)

Stay Active

In today's technology-driven world it's easy to be sedentary and still get things done. But all that sitting without moving much more than our fingertips is not so good for us. In fact, studies have linked [a sedentary lifestyle to increased risk of cancer](#). Addressing this risk isn't just about getting in a few workouts each week (we'll get to that next!) — it's also important to build more

physical activity into your daily routine to break up all those hours of sitting at a desk, sitting in the car, sitting in your living room, sitting at the movies or sports or cultural events....

Once you set your mind to it, you can find many opportunities each day to add a healthy dose of motion. For example, consider walking or riding a bike as part of your commute instead of driving. Or, when you drive to work or anywhere else, instead of parking as close as you can, park further away so you get some walking in. If you have a choice between an elevator and stairs — take the stairs! Want to catch up with a friend? Instead of texting or Facetiming, get together in person and take a stroll, or meet somewhere you can walk or bike to. Some of our employees even [schedule “walking meetings”](#) so they’re not just sitting in a conference room. Get creative — you can add a little physical activity while accomplishing almost any task (or as a break between tasks).

Exercise Regularly

At any age, getting regular exercise is just as important as the foods you eat when it comes to staying healthy and reducing your cancer risk. Exercise delivers a long list of benefits: maintaining a healthy body weight, improving cardiovascular fitness, keeping your body strong and resilient, promoting mental well-being, and much more. In addition to checking out our [Move for Health tips and fitness schedule](#) this month, here are five exercises you can do almost anywhere so you can fit in fitness even on a busy day.

Video Player

00:00
00:43

- Twisted Lunge
- Jump Rope
- Plank with a Twist
- Backwards Lunge
- Walking and Jogging Intervals (not shown)

Set Small, Measurable Health Goals

Whether you're focused on reducing your cancer risk or you have other motives, to succeed at becoming healthier it helps to set small measurable goals. Give yourself a marker for achievement, and make it specific enough that it's clear when you were successful (celebrate!) and when you weren't (try harder tomorrow!) For example, instead of saying "I'm going to walk more" set a measurable goal like using the stairs instead of the elevator at least 2 times per day, 3 days a week. Instead of saying "I will drink more water" aim for a specific goal like drinking at least 3 glasses of water before lunch, 5 days a week. Start small. Be specific. Measure it. And you'll be much more likely to stick to your goals and achieve results.

1

13 7 0 5 0

- Tags: [Cancer](#), [colon cancer](#), [colonoscopy](#), [DIY Health](#), [Do It Yourself](#), [employer resources](#), [fitness](#), [healthy eating](#), [healthy recipe](#), [nutrition](#), [preventive screening](#), [sedentary lifestyle](#)

If you have a member service question that involves personal health or insurance information, do not use the "comments" feature; please call the number on the back of your Member ID card.



Categories

-  [Care Connections](#)
-  [Community](#)
-  [Health & Wellness](#)
-  [Highmark Health Plans](#)
-  [Our Stories](#)



- [The Future of Health Care](#)

Get More DIY Health...Anytime

The Do-It-Yourself Health series is now in its third year on the Highmark Health blog. Each month in 2018, our DIY Health experts will be offering five do-it-yourself tips on a relevant health and wellness issue. Although we know it's exciting to get the fresh, new post each month, don't forget that there are more than 25 previous posts available for you to go back to, browse, or share with friends. You can check them out all in one place, anytime that's convenient for you, on [our DIY Health tag page](#).

- [About](#)
- [Comments](#)