

COLORECTAL CANCER Risk Factors



What is a risk factor? A risk factor is anything that increases your chances of getting a disease, such as cancer.



Most colorectal cancers are found in people with no family history of the disease. Yet, as many as **1 in 3** people who develop colorectal cancer have other family members who have had it.

Hereditary or medical risk factors for colorectal cancer include:

- Personal or family history of colorectal cancer
- Certain genetic disorders (including Lynch syndrome and familial adenomatous polyposis)
- Chronic inflammatory bowel disease (including ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease)
- Type 2 diabetes

Potentially modifiable risk factors for colorectal cancer include:

- Excess body weight
- Physical inactivity
- Smoking
- High consumption of red or processed meat
- Heavy alcohol consumption
- Low intake of calcium, whole-grain, and/or fiber-rich foods

Over **54%** of colorectal cancers are associated with potentially modifiable risk factors.



SCREENING *saves lives.*

Colorectal cancer screening begins at age 45 for average-risk adults. If you know you have a family or personal history that puts you at higher risk for colorectal cancer, talk with your healthcare provider about an early or personalized screening plan. Regular screenings can detect and remove polyps before they become cancerous.



Talk with your doctor to understand your risk, or visit acscancerrisk360.cancer.org to learn more about what you can change to improve your health and lower your cancer risk.

Source: American Cancer Society, 2025