

# Report Says Large Proportion of Colorectal Cancer Deaths Could Be Prevented

ATLANTA –March 1, 2011 – A new report from the American Cancer Society says a large proportion of the 141,000 cases and 49,000 deaths from colorectal cancer expected in the United States this year could be prevented by increasing the use of established screening tests and by applying existing knowledge about colorectal cancer prevention. The report, Colorectal Cancer Facts & Figures 2011-2013, released during National Colon Cancer Awareness Month notes there has been substantial progress in the last decade reducing colorectal cancer incidence and death rates in most population groups in the U.S., largely through the prevention and early detection of colorectal cancer through screening. But even more progress is possible by increasing access to and utilization of colorectal cancer screening tests; almost half of Americans 50 and older are not getting screened according to guidelines.

According to new data in the report, about 141,210 new cases and 49,380 deaths are expected in 2011. About 72% of cases arise in the colon, and about 28% in the rectum.

Other highlights of the report include:

- In both men and women, colorectal cancer is the third most commonly diagnosed cancer and the third leading cause of cancer death.
- The lifetime risk of being diagnosed with cancer of the colon or rectum is about 5% for both men and women in the U.S.
- Colorectal cancer incidence and mortality rates are highest in African American men and women. Incidence rates are 20% higher and mortality rates are about 45% higher than those in whites.
- Incidence and mortality rates among other major racial/ethnic groups are lower than those among whites.
- Colorectal cancer rates in the US vary widely by geographic area. Contributing factors include regional variations in risk factors and access to screening and treatment, which are influenced by socioeconomic factors, legislative policies, and proximity to medical services.
- Colorectal cancer incidence rates have been declining in the U.S. since the mid-1980s. Since 1998, rates have been declining by 3.0% per year in men and by 2.3% per year in women. The acceleration in the decline in the past decade has largely been attributed to the detection and removal of precancerous polyps as a result of colorectal cancer screening.
- Modifiable risk factors that have been associated with an increased risk of colorectal cancer in epidemiologic studies include physical inactivity, obesity, high consumption of red or processed meats, smoking, and moderate-to-heavy alcohol consumption.
- A recent study found that about one-quarter of colorectal cancer cases could be avoided by following a healthy lifestyle, i.e., maintaining a healthy abdominal weight, being physically active at least 30 minutes per day, eating a healthy diet, not smoking, and not drinking excessive amounts of alcohol.
- One of the most important determinants of individual screening participation is a health care provider recommendation.

“The value of early detection has become a topic of wide debate for some cancers,” said Edward Partridge, M.D., national volunteer president of the American Cancer Society. “But for colorectal cancer there should be no debate: screening for colon cancer saves lives. The American Cancer Society has identified colorectal cancer as a major priority because of the enormous potential to prevent the disease, diminish suffering, and save lives.”

The report is available [here](#).

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