Horizon

Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey

Protect Yourself from
Colorectal Cancer

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer-related death among men and women. Colorectal cancer may be the result of a polyp* on the rectum or colon. Because most polyps in their early stages are noncancerous, it is important to have a doctor check for polyps regularly through screenings.

What is screening?

Screening is a process in which doctors check for health problems before they cause symptoms. If a doctor observes that something is abnormal before it causes noticeable problems, treatment can be very promising.

Who should get screened?

The exact causes of colorectal cancer are not yet known, so everybody should be screened. However, people at an increased risk should get screened more often than others. This includes individuals who are over age 50 years and:

- Have ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease.
- Have a family history of colorectal cancer.
- Have polyps.
- Have other genetic predisposition to developing polyps.
- Have had colorectal, ovarian, uterine or breast cancer.
- Smoke.

How can I reduce my risk of getting colorectal cancer?

You can reduce your risk of getting colorectal cancer by exercising regularly**, following a healthy diet, not smoking and getting screened. Colorectal-cancer-fighting foods include whole grains, fruits and vegetables. Eating healthy foods to help protect yourself from colorectal cancer doesn't mean that you have to change your whole diet. Take small steps. Start by substituting brown rice for white rice or whole grain bread for white bread once a week. Switch to dark chocolate instead of milk chocolate. Try some trail mix with dried fruit, peanuts and dark chocolate for a tasty and healthy treat.

*: An abnormal growth that protrudes from the inner wall of the colon or rectum.
**: Talk with your doctor before beginning a new exercise program or diet.