

protect your bottom line

Your *bottom line*, your *best assets* – no matter how we try to cover it up or minimize it, many people are embarrassed, ashamed, and *running behind* on their regular screenings for colorectal cancer.

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cancer killer in the United States, but it doesn't have to be. If everyone aged 50 years or older had regular screening tests, at least 60% of deaths from this cancer could be avoided.

The colon, often called the rectum or bowel, comprises the greatest portion of the large intestine. As the final part of the digestive process, the colon absorbs remaining nutrients and processes waste for elimination as stool.

Abnormal cells or polyps can develop in the colon or the rectum. Most polyps are harmless but some are not. Early detection can help prevent colorectal cancer by finding and removing polyps.



RECOMMENDED SCREENINGS STARTING AT AGE 50

- Fecal occult blood test – every year
- Sigmoidoscopy – every five years (if not having colonoscopy)
- Colonoscopy – every ten years. Individuals with risk factors may require earlier or more frequent screenings.



Protect Your Bottom Line is powered by Spirit of Women®, a national network of hospitals and healthcare providers across the United States that ascribe to the highest standards of excellence in women's health, education, and community outreach.



Allegan General Hospital

Protect Your Bottom Line this March, colorectal cancer awareness month. Talk to your doctor about which tests are right for you and how frequently you should have them.



CALL YOUR DOCTOR IF YOU HAVE ANY SYMPTOMS OF COLORECTAL CANCER, SUCH AS:

- Blood in or on the stool
- A change in bowel habits
- Constant diarrhea, constipation, or fatigue
- Stools that are narrower than usual
- Abdominal pain, or problems with gas or bloating
- Unexplained weight loss

WHO TO CALL:

- Family medicine doctors
- Gastroenterologists
- Nurse practitioners
- Physician assistants

RISK FACTORS AND ACTION STEPS

Family or personal history with colorectal cancer or polyps

ACTION – Share your family and personal health history with your doctor

Changes in certain genes

ACTION – Consider genetic testing

Conditions that cause inflammation of the colon

ACTION – See your gastroenterologist annually and comply with your recommended treatment plan

Tobacco usage, obesity, or sedentary lifestyle

ACTION – Stop smoking and incorporate a healthy eating and exercise plan into your lifestyle

Diets high in fat and low in calcium, folate, and fiber

ACTION – Adapt an eating plan high in fruits and vegetables, high in fiber, low in calories and low in animal fat.



Source: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention