



WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT COLORECTAL CANCER?

No one knows the exact causes of colorectal cancer. However, it is clear that it is not contagious.

The following risk factors may increase the risk of colorectal cancer:

- 1. Obesity** is linked to an increased risk of colorectal cancer.
Try to lose weight if you are overweight.
- 2. Drinking alcohol** may increase the risk.
Reduce your alcohol consumption.
- 3. Age.** The risk of colorectal cancer begins to increase after age 40 and continues to increase as you get older.
Mind your regular check-ups.
- 4. Most colorectal polyps** (polyps are growths on the inner wall of the colon or rectum) are benign, but some polyps (adenomas) can become cancer.
Finding and removing polyps may reduce the risk of colorectal cancer.
- 5. If you have ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease, do not**

forget regular follow-up by your doctor.

- 6. Family history of colorectal cancer:** Close relatives (parents, brothers, sisters, or children) of a person with a history of colorectal cancer are somewhat more likely to develop this disease themselves, especially if the relative had the cancer at a young age. If many close relatives have a history of colorectal cancer, the risk is even greater.
Check your risk with your doctor.
- 7. Personal history of cancer:** A person who has already had colorectal cancer may develop colorectal cancer a second time. Also, women with a history of cancer of the ovary, uterus (endometrial), or breast are at a somewhat higher risk of developing colorectal cancer.
Get regular screening by your doctor.

Stay in good health – ask us for advice

You can find all the information you need about
the **Medical Service and Psychosocial Interventions - Brussels** at
IntraComm>Pers_Admin>Well-being>Health



Screening for colorectal cancer

Screening tests help your doctor find polyps or cancer before you have symptoms. Finding and removing polyps may prevent colorectal cancer. Also, treatment for colorectal cancer is more likely to be effective when the disease is found early.

To find polyps or early colorectal cancer:

- People in their 50s and older should be screened.
- People who are at higher-than-average risk of colorectal cancer should talk with their doctor about whether to have screening tests before age 50, what tests to have, the benefits and risks of each test, and how often to schedule appointments.

The following screening tests can be used to detect polyps, cancer, or other abnormal areas. Your doctor can explain more about each test:

- **Faecal occult blood test (FOBT):** Sometimes cancers or polyps bleed, and the FOBT can detect tiny amounts of blood in the stool. If this test detects blood, other tests are needed to find the

source of the blood. Benign conditions (such as *haemorrhoids*) also can cause blood in the stool.

- **Colonoscopy:** Your doctor examines inside the rectum and colon using a long, lighted tube. If polyps are found, the doctor removes them. For screening a virtual colonoscopy could also be considered.
- **Double-contrast barium enema:** You are given an enema with a barium solution, and air is pumped into your rectum. Several x-ray pictures are taken of your colon and rectum. The barium and air help your colon and rectum show up on the pictures. Polyps or tumours may show up.
- **Digital rectal exam:** A rectal exam is often part of a routine physical examination. Your doctor inserts a lubricated, gloved finger into your rectum to feel for abnormal areas.

Source: National Cancer Institute
www.cancer.gov/cancertopics

Three steps to better health:

The most important you can do to avoid getting ill is to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

1. **Stop smoking.** If you fail to stop, try to cut down.
2. Do **physical activity!** Remember running for the bus, taking the stairs, dancing in your living room, walking the dog, wrestling with the kids – all count as exercise!
3. Make sure you keep a healthy diet. Have a look at our website to see how.

The Medical Service in Brussels can assist you in staying in good health. Start by having your **yearly medical check-up**. The doctor will evaluate your health and give you advice.

Our service also offers a **stop-smoking program**: *contact by mail ADMIN TABACSTOP*.

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