

Colorectal Cancer

Fact Sheet

The Disease

Colorectal cancer is known as a silent killer, because symptoms only show up in the later stages when the disease has already spread. Yet with certain types of screening, colorectal cancer can actually be prevented, by removing polyps before they become cancer.

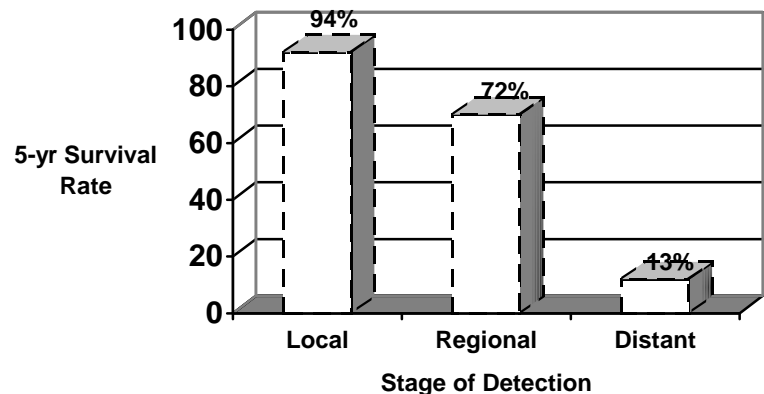
Colorectal cancer is the third most common type of cancer among men and among women and the second most common cause of death from cancer overall in California. In this state, approximately 14,255 new cases and 5,265 deaths from colorectal cancer are expected in 2014. *Source: California 2014 Cancer Facts & Figures (not yet in publication)*

Survival Rates

- Polyps found in screening are removed before they become cancer
- 94 percent survival rate if cancer is found in the earliest stages, before it has spread, but only about 43 percent are found at that early stage
- 72 percent survival rate after cancer has spread to lymph nodes or adjacent tissues
- 13 percent survival rate once it has spread to other parts of the body

Source: California 2013 Cancer Facts & Figures. p.20, 21, 7.

Survival Rates by Disease Stage



Who is at risk?

Risk factors include:

- Age – 91 percent of cases in people 50 and older
- Gender – Nearly as common in women as men
- Race/Ethnicity
 - African Americans higher risk
 - Latinos lower risk
- Health behavior – dietary fat, alcohol, smoking, physical inactivity

Everyone over age 50 should be screened for colorectal cancer.

Symptoms – Only Found in Late Stages

In most cases colorectal cancer develops slowly from an adenomatous polyp (a non-cancerous growth in the colon or rectum), a process which can take up to 10 years.

But if you wait for symptoms, you could be dead. Symptoms only show up in the later stages. Anyone with the following symptoms should contact their doctor immediately:

- Abdominal pain
- Change in bowel habits
- Finding blood (either bright red or dark) in your stool
- Feeling that your bowel does not empty completely
- Feeling very tired all the time
- Losing weight with no known reason

Most often, these symptoms are not due to cancer. Other health problems can cause the same symptoms. Anyone with these symptoms should see a doctor to be diagnosed and treated as soon as possible.

Well-Known Colon Cancer Victims

- Katie Couric's husband **Jay Monahan**
Died in 1998 at the age of 42, leading Ms. Couric to use her role as a TV anchor to become the most well-known advocate for colon cancer screening.
- **Juanita Millender-McDonald**, U.S. Congresswoman, (D-Calf.)
Died in 2007 at the age of 68, just one week after taking a leave of absence from Congress to deal with her illness.
- **Sharon Osbourne**, music producer, television personality (most recently as a judge on America's Got Talent) and wife of Ozzie Osbourne
Diagnosed with advanced colon cancer in 2002 at the age of 50, and given a 33 percent chance of survival. She went on to found the Sharon Osbourne Colon Cancer Program at Cedars Sinai Hospital.
- **Tony Snow**, White House Press Secretary under President George W. Bush
Died in July 2008 at the age of 53.