

Over 50? Be smart!  
Get checked for polyps  
in your colon.



## What is colorectal cancer?

Most cases of colorectal cancer (also known as bowel or colon cancer) develop from tiny growths called polyps. Over 10 to 15 years, some polyps can become cancerous. The majority of polyps can be removed through a colonoscopy procedure.



**Colorectal cancer remained the most common cancer in Hong Kong\***



**1 in 19 men and 1 in 32 women in Hong Kong have colorectal cancer\*\***



**It is the second most common cause of cancer-related deaths\***



**More than 90% of colorectal cancer is diagnosed in people aged over 50\***



**About 85% of colorectal cancer cases are attributed to diet and lifestyle factors^**

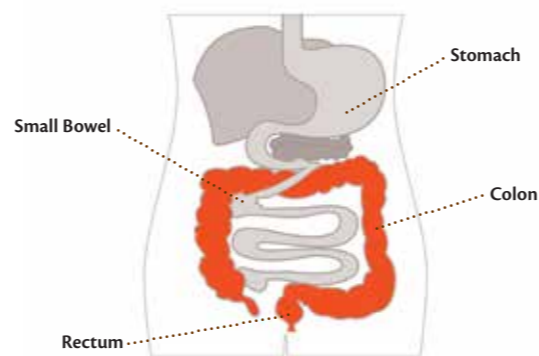
\* Hong Kong Cancer Registry, Hospital Authority 2018 (figures in 2016)

\*\* Lifetime risk for Hong Kong people before age 75

^ Reference from Dr Yuen Siu Tsan - Hong Kong Cancer Fund's medical advisor, Deputy Medical Superintendent of St Paul's Hospital and Honorary Clinical Professor of The University of Hong Kong's Department of Pathology

## What is the bowel?

After you have swallowed your food, it passes down the food pipe (oesophagus) into your stomach. Digestion begins in the stomach, after which food passes into the small bowel where digestion continues and the body absorbs nutrients from the food. The digested food then moves into the large bowel. The colon absorbs water as digested food passes through it, and the waste matter left behind becomes stool (poo) and is stored in the rectum. Maintaining bowel health is essential in lowering your risk of cancer.



## What are the symptoms?

If you are experiencing some or all of these symptoms, you may have problems with your bowel. However, **in its early stages colorectal cancer often has no symptoms and can go unnoticed.** To ensure early detection, consult your doctor.

- Blood or mucus in your stool
- Changes in bowel movements lasting for more than two weeks (alternating between diarrhoea and constipation, stool becoming very narrow, a sense of incomplete emptying after a bowel movement)
- General abdominal discomfort (colicky pain, fullness or cramps)
- Unexplained weight loss
- Constant tiredness or weakness

## Five simple tips for colon health



**MORE** veggies  
**LESS** meat

A diet high in vegetables, fruit and fibre, and low in meat provides a wide variety of different nutrients with properties that can facilitate bowel movements, shortening the contact time between any carcinogenic substances and intestinal cells. It also facilitates healthy probiotics. An adult should consume at least two servings of fruit and three servings of vegetables a day (one serving of fruit is the size of a fist, one serving of vegetables is half a bowl of cooked vegetables).



**MORE** exercise

Exercise can also facilitate bowel movements and shorten the time carcinogenic substances stay in the colon. 30 minutes of moderate exercise is recommended every day such as jogging or fast walking. You may consider walking to your destination and taking the stairs instead of elevators.



**LESS** alcohol

Excessive alcohol consumption can cause cancer by increasing the risk of gene mutation which causes cancer in different parts of the body including the colon.



**DON'T** smoke

Nicotine and other carcinogenic substances in cigarettes also increase the risk of gene mutation which can cause cancer.



**GET** checked

Colorectal cancer takes time to develop and goes through different stages of polyp growth. Detection and removal of early-stage polyps can prevent the development of cancer. Even when cancer has developed, treatment of early-stage cancer has a very high success rate. Regular colon check-ups are essential in preventing colorectal cancer.

## How to screen for colorectal cancer?

As there are often no symptoms of colorectal cancer in its early stages, simple, regular check-ups can offer peace of mind and early detection.

### Colonoscopy



A colonoscopy is a screening test, which involves a flexible tube (colonoscope) being used to allow a medical professional to see inside your colon and rectum on a TV monitor. If necessary,

the doctor can remove any polyps discovered through colonoscopy.

If you are aged 50 or above, or are under 50 but have a family history of colorectal cancer, contact your doctor to discuss getting checked and having a colonoscopy.

### Faecal Immunochemical Test (FIT)



This is a type of faecal occult blood test to detect and quantify the amount of human blood in a single stool sample. Those with abnormal results are then invited for further testing.

## Support

Call us if you or someone you know would like to benefit from our **FREE** cancer support services.

Helpline  
**(3656 0800)**  
[www.cancer-fund.org](http://www.cancer-fund.org)

Thanks to Dr. Yuen Siu Tsan for his help reviewing this leaflet