

OXIHER HEALTH PRIORITIES

FOCUS ON COLORECTAL CANCER AWARENESS, PREVENTION AND ADDRESSING COMMUNITY NEEDS

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Colorectal cancer education and prevention are crucial for improving health and saving lives. Efforts to raise awareness about prevention strategies, early detection and advanced treatment options play a significant role in reducing the impact of this disease.

While initiatives like **National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month** serve as important reminders, the need for informed decision-making and proactive health measures remains constant. By staying educated, individuals can take meaningful steps toward better health and improved outcomes.

Colorectal Cancer Rates

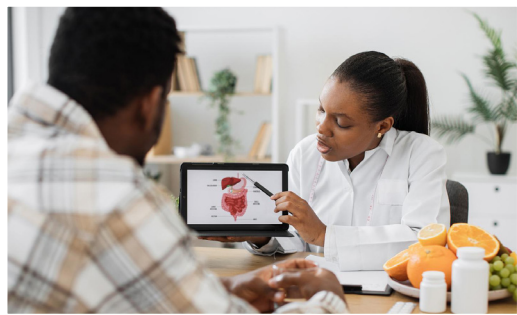
Colorectal cancer develops when cells in the colon or rectum grow uncontrollably. Often, small clumps of cells, called polyps, form in these areas. While many polyps are harmless, **some can become cancerous over time**. Regular screening with a colonoscopy allows for early detection and removal of polyps before they turn into cancer, significantly improving health outcomes.

In 2025, the **American Cancer Society** expects more than 105,000 new cases of colon cancer and about 47,000 new cases of rectal cancer in the United States. The good news is that overall rates of colorectal cancer have dropped by about 1% each year from 2012 to 2021, largely due to increased screenings and healthier lifestyle choices. However, colorectal cancer cases are rising among people under 50, and experts are still unsure why. According to the American Cancer Society, colorectal cancer in younger adults is increasing by 2.4% each year, even though routine screening for those at average risk does not start until age 45. As a result, younger patients are often **diagnosed at later stages** (III or IV), when treatment is more difficult, and a cure is harder to achieve.



Community Health Outcomes and Colorectal Cancer

Colorectal cancer (CRC) affects people differently based on where they live, their income, and their education level. Research shows that **individuals in the poorest neighborhoods face a 31% higher risk of being diagnosed with CRC compared to those in wealthier areas**. People who have not completed high school have a 42% greater chance of developing CRC than those with postgraduate education.



Racial differences are also significant: Black Americans are 15% more likely to be diagnosed with CRC and 35% more likely to die from it compared to other racial groups. Hispanic Americans also have lower screening rates, which can lead to later diagnoses and worse outcomes. Closing these gaps requires action at multiple levels. Policy reforms, increased funding for community health programs, and efforts to build trust between healthcare systems and community members are all necessary to ensure equal access to life-saving screenings and treatments.

Recognizing the Symptoms and Taking Action Through Screening

Early detection is key for effective treatment. Symptoms of CRC may not always be obvious, but can include changes in bowel habits (diarrhea, constipation or narrowing of stools), blood in stool, persistent abdominal pain or cramping, unexplained weight loss and fatigue. Anyone experiencing these symptoms should see a healthcare provider as soon as possible.

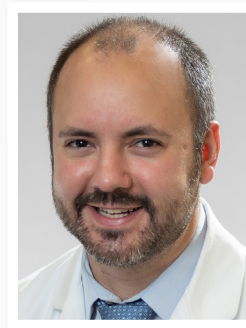
Screening for CRC is a powerful tool for prevention and early detection. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends regular screenings for adults aged 45 to 75. Screening methods include:

- **Stool-Based Tests:** Non-invasive and convenient test that detects hidden blood or genetic markers in stool samples.
- **Visual Exams:** Colonoscopies and sigmoidoscopies allow doctors to look inside the colon and remove polyps before they become cancerous.
- **Blood Tests:** New tests that detect CRC markers in the blood are in active research and development. **In July 2024, the FDA approved Shield**, the first blood test for colon cancer screening in average-risk individuals.

Dr. Jonathan Mizrahi, Section Head, Medical Oncology, Hematology & Oncology has shared that “it’s important to note that if you have a positive result on any of the stool or blood-based CRC screening tests, the next step is to perform a colonoscopy.

“**Colonoscopy remains the gold standard screening test** for CRC as it allows for detection of cancer and potential prevention by removing pre-cancerous polyps. Having multiple options is important, because we want to lower any barriers to patients being screened.”

For more from Dr. Mizrahi and other physicians, and to learn how Ochsner Health sets the standard for colorectal cancer treatment please click [here](#).



Ochsner Health Leads the Way in Population Health Colorectal Screenings

Ochsner Health has been recognized for its outstanding CRC screening efforts in a recent learning collaborative led by the American Medical Group Association (AMGA). Ochsner outperformed many leading medical facilities in screening measures including:

- Surpassing the Healthy People 2030 goal of screening 68% of eligible patients (ages 45 to 75)
- Screening an additional 22,855 patients over the prior 18 months ending December 31, 2024
- Improving screening rates among patients across all insurance types including commercial, Medicare, Medicaid and uninsured

Steps Toward a Healthier Future

Lowering CRC cases and deaths requires a multi-pronged approach:

- **Increasing Screening Rates:** Promoting access to and education about screening options can catch cancer early, improving survival rates
- **Promoting Healthy Lifestyle Choices:** Encouraging a diet rich in fiber, regular physical activity and smoking cessation
- **Addressing Community Health Needs:** Changing policies and growing programs aimed at reducing healthcare barriers and improving access for all.

Colorectal cancer awareness is not just about education—it's about action. By recognizing the risks, knowing the symptoms, and using screening tools, individuals can take control of their health. At the same time, continued efforts to address community health needs will ensure that life-saving measures reach everyone, helping to build a future with fewer CRC cases and deaths.



The Ochsner-Xavier Institute for Health Equity and Research (OXIHER) regularly shines a light on some of the most critical health needs affecting the communities we serve. OXIHER works in alignment with Healthy State to develop effective strategies to address and improve overall population health.