



What Are the Key Statistics for Colorectal Cancer?

Excluding skin cancers, colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer diagnosed in both men and women in the United States. The American Cancer Society estimates that about 108,070 new cases of colon cancer (53,760 in men and 54,310 in women) and 40,740 new cases of rectal cancer (23,490 in men and 17,250 in women) will be diagnosed in 2008.

Overall, the lifetime risk for developing colorectal cancer is about 1 in 19 (5.4%). This risk is slightly higher in men than in women. A number of other factors (described in "What are the risk factors for colorectal cancer?") may also affect a person's risk. Colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States when men and women are considered separately, and the second leading cause when both sexes are combined. It is expected to cause about 49,960 deaths (24,260 men and 25,700 women) during 2008.

The death rate (the number of deaths per 100,000 people per year) from colorectal cancer has been dropping for more than 20 years. There are a number of likely reasons for this. One is that polyps are being found by screening and removed before they can develop into cancers. Screening is also allowing more colorectal cancers to be found earlier when the disease is easier to cure. In addition, treatment for colorectal cancer has improved over the last several years. As a result, there are now more than 1 million survivors of colorectal cancer in the United States.

Statistics related to survival among people with colorectal cancer are discussed in the section "How is colorectal cancer staged?"