

# WOMEN'S HEALTH NEWS

Center of Excellence in Women's Health ♦ Neighborhoods Initiative Division of Community Health  
University of Illinois at Chicago

December 2005  
Volume 1, Issue 1



Chicago Women's Health Initiative, 1640 W. Roosevelt, MC 980, Chicago, Illinois 60608  
312-996-9077

## Welcome!

Welcome to *Women's Health News*, a publication of the Chicago Women's Health Initiative. The Chicago Women's Health Initiative is a joint project of the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Center of Excellence in Women's Health, UIC Neighborhoods Initiative, and several beauty shops in Chicago. Together we are working to provide health information and resources to salon patrons to improve the health of women and their families.

Each issue of *Women's Health News* will provide in-depth information about a health topic that women should be concerned about. We will also provide recipes and other tips to help women lead healthier lives.

This issue of *Women's Health News* will focus on the health of the colon and rectum. Black women

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

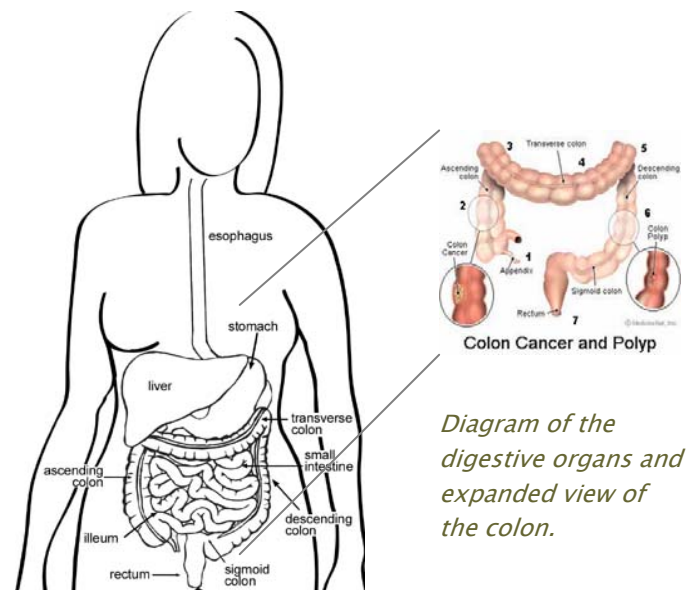
Welcome!	1
Healthy Digestion: The Colon and Rectum	1
Cancer of the Colon and Rectum	2
RECIPE: Lentil Soup	2
Colorectal Cancer Risk Factors and Prevention	3
Symptoms of Colorectal Cancer	3
Screening for Colorectal Cancer	4
RECIPE: Black Bean Salad	4

are more likely to be diagnosed with cancer of the colon and/or rectum than other races. However, if it is detected early, it can almost always be cured. Therefore, regular screenings for cancer of the colon and rectum are extremely important, especially for women and men over age 50. Those who have a history of the disease in their family or are concerned about their risk should speak to their health care provider about beginning screening before age 50.

## Healthy Digestion: The Colon and Rectum

When you eat, the food you swallow travels through your esophagus to your **stomach**, **small intestine**, and **large intestine** before it is eliminated from your body. Throughout the process, food is broken down so nutrients can be removed for your body to use. The **colon** makes up the first 4 to 5 feet of the large intestine, and the **rectum** is the last 4 to 5 inches. Partly digested food enters the colon from the small intestine. In the colon, water and nutrients are removed from the food and unused food is stored as waste. The waste passes from the colon into the rectum and then out of the body through the anus.

Source: National Cancer Institute. *What You Need to Know About Cancer of the Colon and Rectum*. [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov).



## Cancer of the Colon and Rectum

Cancer is a disease in which certain body cells don't function right, divide very fast, and produce too much tissue that forms a **tumor** (a tumor is an abnormal mass of tissue – tumors are not always cancerous.) Cancer that begins in the colon is called **colon cancer**. Cancer that begins in the rectum is called **rectal cancer**. Cancers affecting either of these organs also may be called **colorectal cancer**.

Most types of colorectal cancer begin with **polyps** (grape-like growths on the lining of the colon and rectum). Polyps are very common in people over age 50 and usually are not cancerous. But some polyps do develop slowly over the years into cancer, often causing no symptoms. Screening tests are important for finding polyps that can be removed to prevent cancer and for finding

colorectal cancer at an early stage when it can be cured (see "Screening for Colorectal Cancer", page 4.)

Colorectal cancer affects an equal number of women and men each year, and is most often found in people over the age of 50. Excluding skin cancer, it is the third most diagnosed cancer for women, following breast and lung cancers and it is the second leading cause of cancer death in the United States. Colorectal cancer is often called a "silent" disease since symptoms don't always develop until it is difficult to cure. The good news is that you can prevent colorectal cancer, and it is mostly curable when it is found early through regular screening tests.

*Source: National Cancer Institute. [What You Need to Know About Cancer of the Colon and Rectum](#). [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov).*

### Recipe: Lentil Soup

2 cups dry lentils, sorted and washed  
2 carrots diced  
1 onion diced  
2 stalks celery diced  
1 large potato diced

2 cloves garlic, minced  
10 chicken wings  
5 quarts of water  
2 tablespoons of Mrs. Dash seasoning  
1 tablespoon salt



Combine all ingredients in a large pot and bring to a boil over high heat. Lower heat and simmer until the lentils and potatoes are tender and the chicken meat falls off of the bone, 45 minutes to 1 hour. To reduce the fat, after cooking chill soup in shallow containers overnight in the refrigerator, skim off fat that rises to the top and then reheat to boil and serve.

Yields 10 servings.

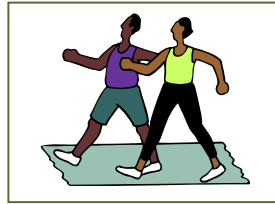
Beans are high in complex carbohydrates, protein and dietary fiber, low in fat, calories, and sodium, and completely cholesterol-free.

For more nutrition information go to: [www.cphp.uic.edu](http://www.cphp.uic.edu) and click on links.

## Colorectal Cancer Risk Factors and Prevention

The following risk factors may increase a person's chances of getting colorectal cancer:

- Being of African-American or Hispanic descent
- Being over the age of 50.
- Eating a diet that is high in fat and calories and low in fiber.
- Polyps (non-cancerous growths on the inner wall of the colon and rectum.) While polyps are not cancerous, some types of polyps can become cancer if they are not removed.
- Personal history of ovarian, uterine, breast or colorectal cancer.
- Having one or more close family members (parents, sisters, brothers, children) who have had colorectal cancer.
- Inflammatory bowel disease, such as *Crohn's Disease* or *ulcerative colitis*.
- Lifestyle factors such as lack of exercise, being overweight, drinking alcohol, and smoking.



*Regular exercise helps to decrease the risk of developing colorectal cancer.*

- Long-term exposure to environmental or occupational toxins (poisons).

To help prevent colorectal cancer, eat a healthy diet that is low in fat, high in fiber, and includes at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day; get regular exercise (30 minutes per day most days of the week); lose weight if you are overweight or obese; limit alcohol intake; and do not smoke or use tobacco products. Talk with your health care provider about other things you can do to lower your risk for colorectal cancer.

*Source: National Cancer Institute. [What You Need to Know About Cancer of the Colon and Rectum](#). [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov).*

## Symptoms of Colorectal Cancer

There are often no symptoms for colorectal cancer in its early stages, which is why screening tests are important. People who do have symptoms can have:

- A change in bowel habits.
- Diarrhea, constipation, or feeling that the bowel doesn't empty completely.
- Bright red or very dark blood in the stool.
- Stools that are narrower than normal.
- Discomfort in the abdomen – frequent gas pains, bloating, fullness, and/or cramps.
- Weight loss with no known reason.
- Constant and extreme tiredness.
- Vomiting.
- Anemia (low iron in the blood) with no known reason.

Talk with your health care provider right away if you think you are having any of these symptoms.

*Source: National Cancer Institute. [What You Need to Know About Cancer of the Colon and Rectum](#). [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov).*

*Healthy Woman News* is brought to you by the **Chicago Women's Health Initiative**, a collaboration between the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) and five beauty shops in Chicago.

For more information about the Chicago Women's Health Initiative, please contact:

**Virginia Julion:** 312.996.9077 or [vjulion@uic.edu](mailto:vjulion@uic.edu)  
**Kris Zimmermann:** 312.413.4251 or [kzimme3@uic.edu](mailto:kzimme3@uic.edu)

*Disclaimer: It is not the intention of the Chicago Women's Health Initiative to provide specific medical advice, but rather to provide women with information to better understand their health. The Chicago Women's Health Initiative urges you to consult with a qualified physician for diagnosis and for answers to your personal questions.*

## Screening for Colorectal Cancer

Colorectal cancer can be prevented by getting screening tests once you reach age 50. These tests look for polyps and early signs of cancer. Some of the tests can remove polyps at the same time. Talk with your health care provider about what tests are best for you and how often you should get them. If you have a family history of colorectal cancer or other special conditions, your doctor may suggest starting screening tests before age 50.

Test	Description	How often?
Fecal occult blood test (FOBT)	Checks for hidden blood in the stool	Every year
Flexible sigmoidoscopy	An exam where a health care provider looks at the rectum and the lower part of the colon using a <b>sigmoidoscope</b> , a tube with a light on the end.	Every 5 years
Colonoscopy	An exam when a health care provider looks at the rectum and the entire colon using a <b>colonoscope</b> , an instrument with a light on the end. If polyps are found, they can be removed.	Every 5 to 10 years
Double contrast barium enema (DCBE)	A series of x-rays of the colon and rectum. You are first given an enema with barium in it, which outlines the colon and rectum on the x-rays.	Every 5 to 10 years (only if not having a colonoscopy every 10 years)
Digital rectal exam	A health care provider inserts a lubricated, gloved finger into the rectum to feel for any problem areas.	Every 5 to 10 years at the time of other screening tests

Source: The National Women's Health Information Center. [www.womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov).

### Recipe: Black Bean Salad

1–16 ounce can black beans drained  
 1–16 ounce can diced tomatoes with juice  
 1 large green bell pepper diced  
 1–8 ounce can corn kernels  
 Juice of one lime

2 Tablespoons olive oil  
 ½ teaspoon cumin  
 ½ teaspoon black pepper  
 ¼ cup chopped cilantro

Combine all ingredients and mix well, store in refrigerator until serving. Salad may be prepared one day in advance. Serve on a bed of shredded lettuce. All canned ingredients can be replaced with fresh cooked. The salad can also be used as a filling for vegetarian burritos.

Yields 5 servings.

For more information go to [www.americanbean.org](http://www.americanbean.org).



