

Continuous Physical Activity Associated with Lower Risk of Colorectal Cancer

Source: *Cancer Epidemiology Biomarkers and Prevention*

Together, colon and rectal cancers (colorectal cancers) are among the most prevalent cancers in the United States. Although the exact cause is unknown, there are risk factors that known to increase the chance of developing colorectal cancer. People over the age of 50 have a higher risk of colorectal cancers, but it has also been diagnosed in individuals of all ages. These cancers are more common in people whose diets are high in fat and low in fiber. Family history can also play an important role. Symptoms of rectal and colon cancer include vomiting, blood in the stool, abdominal pain, and changes in bowel movements, though these symptoms may indicate the presence of illness other than colorectal cancer. Treatments for colorectal cancer are chemotherapy, radiation, surgery, and immuno-therapy. These treatments have many side effects, so the best therapy for colorectal cancer is prevention.

A recent study examined the effect of consistent exercise on the risk of dying from colon cancer. The study included over 150,000 men and women who were enrolled in the American Cancer Society Prevention Study II to determine whether changes in physical activity influenced either the incidence of colon cancer diagnosis or the risk of death from the disease. Over a ten year follow-up period, it was found that those who exercised consistently for at least ten years had the lowest risk of colon cancer death. It was also found that being physically active even after the diagnosis can reduce the risk of recurrence and death. These findings highlight the importance of lifelong physical activity to reduce the risk of colon cancer.¹

¹Wolin KY, Patel AV, Campbell PT, et al. Change in physical activity and colon cancer incidence and mortality. *Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev.* Dec2010;19(12):3000-4.