

Screening tests for colon cancer

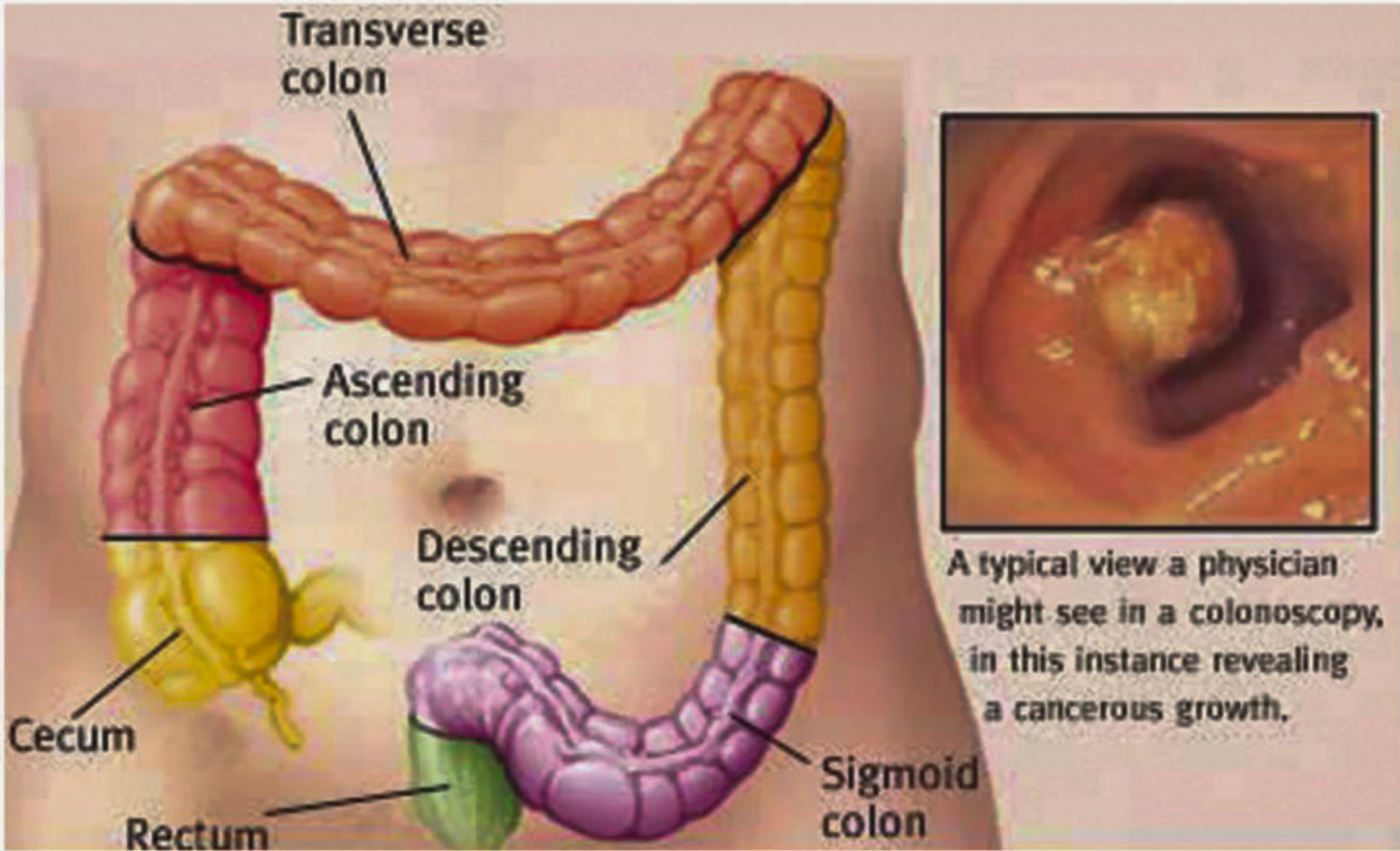
PROF DR ANISUR RAHMAN

Regular screening can catch cancer early, when it is most treatable and help prevent the disease by finding abnormal growths called polyps that can turn into cancer. Colon cancer does not get the same attention as some higher-profile cancers, but it should. Older age, especially 60 years or above is a risk for colon cancer; further family history of colon cancer or having inflammatory bowel disease has also proven to be a risk factor for colon cancer. A good news about colon cancer is it can be prevented. 75% of all cases could be avoided by things you can do.

There are a number of effective screening tests for colon cancer. Some are easy to do but need to be done more often. Others are more involved but need to be done less often. Which test you should have depends on your personal preferences and medical history. A surgeon can help you decide about which test to take.

Most people begin getting tested at age 50. People with a family history of colon cancer or other important risk factors may begin testing at younger ages and get tested more often.

1) Stool occult blood test every year: This is a test that



looks for hidden blood in the stool, which can be a sign of cancer. The test is quick and easy. You just take small samples of your stool, which are then sent to a lab to be tested.

2) Colonoscopy every 10 years: A small flexible tube with a camera at the end is used to examine the full length of the inside of the colon. You are sedated for the test. If the exam finds polyps or other suspicious growths, they can be removed during the test.

3) Flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years: An exam similar to a colonoscopy that uses a small flexible tube to examine the lower part of the colon (the sigmoid). You don't need to be sedated for a sigmoidoscopy, so it is an out-patient procedure only.

4) Virtual colonoscopy every 5 years: A type of CT scan that creates a precise 3D image of the inside of the colon. During the test, a small tube is inserted into the rectum to gently inflate the colon with air. The scan itself

takes just a few minutes.

Further, to avoid risk of colon cancer, a healthy weight should be maintained. At least 11 different cancers have been linked to weight gain and obesity, including colon cancer. Eating too much red meat – like steak or hamburger – increases the risk of colon cancer. And processed meats – like bacon or sausage – raise risk even more.

We also advice people to quit smoking. On top of raising the risk of serious diseases like heart

disease, stroke and emphysema, smoking is a major cause of many cancers, including colon cancer. If you do smoke, quitting has real benefits, which start shortly after your last cigarette. Alcohol also can increase the risk of colon and other cancers at even low levels. Heavy drinkers should try to cut down or quit.

Another tips is to be physically active. It lowers the risk of many serious diseases, including colon cancer, and provides a good mental boost. Any amount of physical activity is better than none, but it is good to aim for around 30 minutes or more of moderate activity each day. Choose things you enjoy, like brisk walking, cycling or gardening.

There is good evidence that getting enough calcium and vitamin D can help protect against colon cancer. Recommended dose is 1,000 to 1,200 mg per day of calcium and about 1,000 international units (IU) per day of vitamin D. A daily multivitamin is a good nutrition that can also help protect against colon cancer. Avoid mega-dose vitamins. A standard multivitamin is all you need.

Get screened against colon cancer and get protected.

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CONTROVERSY

Canada to allow doctor-assisted suicide

Canada's Supreme Court has ruled that doctors may help patients who have severe and incurable medical conditions to die, overturning a 1993 ban, reports BBC.

In a unanimous decision, the court said the law impinged on Canadians' rights.

The case was brought by a civil rights group on behalf of two women, Kay Carter and Gloria Taylor, with degenerative diseases. Both have since died.

The government now has a year to rewrite its law on assisted suicide. If it does not, the current law will be struck down.

Assisted suicide is legal in several European countries and a few US states.

In Canada it is illegal to counsel, aid or abet a suicide, and the offence carries up to 14 years in prison. Canada is not alone in grappling with the thorny issue of dying laws. The debate was reignited in the United States last year by campaigner Brittany Maynard.

The 29-year-old was forced to travel from California, where the practice is illegal, to the Oregon where it has been legal since 1997. A legal case is now taking place in New York.

Some politicians in the UK are trying to introduce similar rules, but the government does not back it.

Switzerland allows "assisted suicide". This does not require a terminal illness, but must be performed by a patient and has led to "suicide-tourism" across Europe.

There is a profound gulf between those who think assisted dying is a fundamental human right and those who have ethical objections and worry about the implications for the disabled and vulnerable. There are no easy answers.

HEALTH bulletin

Pregnant travellers offered new flight advice

The safest time to fly during pregnancy is before 37 weeks or, if carrying twins, before 32 weeks, new advice says.

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists says flying is not harmful during a low-risk pregnancy, but there may be side-effects.

If more than 28 weeks pregnant, a woman should take her medical notes and a GP's letter.

Many airlines have their own rules on when pregnant women can fly.

Although everyone who flies is exposed to a slight increase in radiation, there is no evidence that flying causes miscarriage, early labour or a woman's waters to break.

Blueberries may help control blood pressure

Eating blueberries every day might improve borderline high blood pressure in middle-aged women, according to a small U.S. Study published on Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

Women who ate freeze-dried blueberries for two months had lowered blood pressure and increased levels of a chemical that relaxes blood vessel walls.



How to promote healthy diets

STAR HEALTH DESK

Diet can depend on an individual's food choices, but also the availability and affordability of healthy foods, and sociocultural factors. Therefore, promoting a healthy food environment requires involvement across multiple sectors and stakeholders, including government, public and the private sector.

Governments have a central role in creating a healthy food environment that enables people to adopt and maintain healthy dietary practices.

Effective actions by policy-makers include:

1. Coordinate trade, food and agricultural policies with the protection and promotion of public health:

- increase incentives for producers and retailers to grow, use and sell fruits and vegetables;
- reduce incentives for the food industry to use saturated fats and free sugars;
- set and enforce targets to reformulate food products to cut the contents of salt, fats (i.e. saturated fats and trans fats) and free sugars;
- implement the WHO recommendations on the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children;
- establish standards to promote healthy, safe and affordable food in public institutions;
- encourage private companies to provide healthy food in their



workplaces;

- set incentives and rules so consumers have healthy, safe and affordable food choices;
- encourage transnational, national and local food services and catering outlets to improve the nutritional quality of their food, create real choices, and review portion size and price;
- consider taxes and subsidies to encourage food manufacturers to produce healthier food and make healthy products available and affordable.

2. Encourage consumers demand for healthy foods and meals:

- promote consumer awareness;
- develop school policies and programmes that encourage children to adopt a healthy diet;
- educate children, adolescents and adults about nutrition and

healthy dietary practices;

- encourage culinary skills, including in schools;
 - allow informed choices through proper food labelling that ensures accurate, standardised and comprehensible information on food content in line with the Codex Alimentarius Commission guidelines;
 - provide dietary counselling in primary health care.
3. Promote healthy nutrition in infants and young children:
- Implement the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes
 - promote and support breast-feeding in health services and the community, including through the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative.

Source: World Health Organisation

Psycho-social care to victims of arson attacks in Dhaka

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Victims of recent arson attacks taken to the Burn Unit at Dhaka Medical College Hospital are now able to access psycho-social care from international medical humanitarian organisation Médecins Sans Frontières / Doctors Without Borders (MSF), says a press release. Services are similarly being made available to their caretakers.

Since 31st January 2015, when MSF began working under an agreement made directly with Dhaka Medical College Hospital, the medical group has been providing consultations to 68 people suffering from psychological problems related to the traumatic experience they have suffered and the subsequent recovery process.

"The trauma of suffering a serious burn, coupled with the permanent disfiguring of the face and body, can lead to severe and long-term psychological problems that impact a person's ability to live and work, and many of our patients are the primary earners in their family," said MSF Bangladesh Country Director Parthesarathy Rajendran.

"Providing psycho-social care and support, primarily through bedside counseling and psychological first aid, will help them to overcome problems resulting from the harrowing event they have experienced," he added.

While MSF is focusing on the psycho social needs of burns victims, it has also donated approximately 850,000 takas worth of drugs and medical equipment to assist Dhaka Medical College Hospital's treatment of their physical injuries.

MSF is an international medical humanitarian organisation providing medical care in almost 70 countries worldwide. The Nobel Peace Prize 1999 was awarded to Médecins Sans Frontières in recognition of the organisation's pioneering humanitarian work on several continents.



/StarHealthBD

Knowing for better living

30 minutes of activity a day can help to prevent heart attack and stroke

Take low fat diet

Be physically active

Avoid smoking

Eat vegetables and fresh fruits

Maintain healthy weight

Consult your Doctor



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