

# Colorectal Cancer in Young Adults: Recognizing the Signs and Challenges.

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## Introduction

Colorectal cancer, a disease traditionally associated with older adults, is increasingly affecting younger individuals. While the overall incidence of colorectal cancer has been declining in recent years, there has been a concerning rise in cases among young adults below the age of 50. This shift in demographics presents unique challenges in terms of awareness, diagnosis, and treatment. In this article, we will explore the signs of colorectal cancer in young adults, shed light on the challenges faced, and emphasize the importance of early detection and prevention strategies [1].

Colorectal cancer, which includes cancers of the colon and rectum, occurs when abnormal cells form tumors in the lining of the large intestine. While it is still more common in older adults, the incidence among young people has been rising steadily. Factors such as genetics, lifestyle choices, and environmental influences contribute to the development of colorectal cancer in young adults. However, the exact reasons for the increase in cases among this age group are not yet fully understood [2].

Diagnosing colorectal cancer in young adults poses challenges due to the misconception that it primarily affects older individuals. Symptoms are often overlooked, leading to delayed diagnosis and treatment. Moreover, traditional screening methods like colonoscopies are not routinely recommended for individuals under 50, making early detection more difficult in this age group. As a result, colorectal cancer is often diagnosed at advanced stages in younger patients, necessitating more aggressive treatments and adversely affecting outcomes [3].

Preventing colorectal cancer in young adults involves adopting a healthy lifestyle, including regular exercise, a balanced diet rich in fibers, and limited consumption of processed foods and red meat. Avoiding tobacco and excessive alcohol consumption also reduces the risk. Additionally, individuals with a family history of colorectal cancer should undergo genetic counseling to assess their risk and consider earlier screening [4].

Raising awareness about colorectal cancer in young adults is crucial for early detection and improved outcomes. Public health campaigns, educational initiatives in schools and colleges, and community outreach programs can help disseminate information about the signs, risks, and prevention strategies associated with colorectal cancer. Advocacy for

lowering the screening age and encouraging healthcare providers to consider colorectal cancer as a possibility in younger patients with relevant symptoms is essential. While age is a significant factor, other risk factors contribute to the development of colorectal cancer in young adults [5].

These include a family history of colorectal cancer or certain hereditary conditions such as Lynch syndrome or familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP). Inflammatory bowel diseases like Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis also increase the risk. Additionally, individuals with a history of radiation treatment to the abdomen or pelvis may be at higher risk [6].

Traditionally, routine colorectal cancer screenings, including colonoscopies, begin at the age of 50. However, due to the increasing incidence among young adults, there is a growing discussion about lowering the recommended screening age [7].

Many healthcare organizations are evaluating the potential benefits of starting screenings at an earlier age, especially for individuals with a family history of colorectal cancer or other risk factors [8].

Challenges in implementing these changes include healthcare accessibility, insurance coverage, and addressing patient concerns about invasive procedures. Colorectal cancer not only affects physical health but also takes a toll on the emotional and mental well-being of young adults [9].

A cancer diagnosis at a younger age can disrupt education, career plans, relationships, and family planning. The financial burden of treatment, coupled with the challenges of managing the disease during the prime years of life, adds significant stress. Support systems, counseling services, and patient advocacy groups play a crucial role in helping young adults navigate these challenges and maintain a good quality of life [10].

## Conclusion

Colorectal cancer in young adults is a growing concern that demands attention from both the medical community and the general public. Recognizing the signs, understanding the challenges, and promoting prevention and early detection are essential steps toward reducing the impact of this disease on younger individuals. By increasing awareness, advocating for policy changes, and encouraging healthier lifestyles, we can work together to address the rising incidence of colorectal cancer in young adults and improve outcomes for those affected.

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