



香港紅十字會
HONG KONG RED CROSS

Understanding Colorectal Cancer

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Colorectal cancer is the second commonest cancer in Hong Kong. In 2020, there were 5087 new cases. Of which 2905 were male and 2182 were female. A total of 2287 people died from this cancer, accounting for 15.4% of all cancer deaths. Early detection and timely treatment are crucial.

Large bowel is the lower part of the digestive system, consisting the colon and rectum.

Sometimes, abnormal cells will emerge on the bowel wall, growing into polyps, ulcers or other forms of mass. Most of the colorectal polyps are benign, but a small portion of them may develop into malignant tumours, becoming cancer.

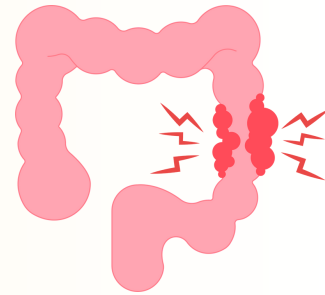
Common Signs & Symptoms

- Bloody or stained stool, black stool, stools with mucus, or rectal bleeding
- Change in bowel habits (persistent constipation or diarrhea), change in the shape of the stool (thin strip), feeling of incomplete bowel emptying;
- Unexplained weight loss
- Lower abdominal pain (distended abdomen or colicky abdominal pain)
- Symptoms of anemia: cold hands and feet, fatigue, palpitation, shortness of breath, pallor, dizziness.

But early colorectal cancer may have no symptoms.

Risk factors

- Low fibre intake
- High consumption of red meat and processed meat
- Lack of physical activity, obesity
- Alcohol consumption and smoking



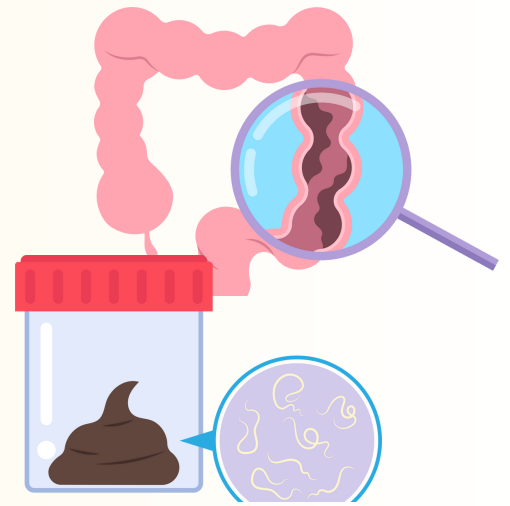
Individuals with the following risk factors are more prone to developing colorectal cancer:

- Having hereditary bowel diseases, e.g. familial adenomatous polyposis or Lynch Syndrome
- Persistent inflammation of the bowel, e.g. ulcerative colitis
- History of colonic polyps
- Family history of colorectal cancer, particularly in first-degree relatives (i.e. parents, siblings or children)



Diagnosis

- Sigmoidoscopy & colonoscopy
- Barium enema examination
- Rectal examination
- Fecal Occult Blood Test
- Blood Test etc.



High-risk individuals and people with the mentioned symptoms should consult doctors and arrange investigation as soon as possible.

Colorectal cancer, if detected and treated early, is highly curable. Overall, the five-year relative survival rate was 58.2% for all stages combined.

The rates were high for stage I (95.7%) and stage II (87.3%). It dropped to 68.7% for stage III and further declined to 9.3% for stage IV.

Prevention

By adopting healthy lifestyle to prevent or reduce the risk of getting colorectal cancer.

- Eat more food rich in fibre
- Eat less red meat and processed meat
- Regular physical activities
- Maintain a healthy body weight and waist circumference
- Abstain from drinking alcohol and smoking



Colorectal Cancer Screening

The Government's Colorectal Cancer Screening Programme subsidises asymptomatic Hong Kong residents aged between 50 and 75 to receive screening service in private sector for prevention of colorectal cancer.

Participants will first take a Faecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT) that can detect small amounts of blood in stool, even if they are invisible to the naked eye. If there is blood, colonoscopy will be arranged to remove polyps, if any, to prevent them from developing into cancer.

For more information, please visit the website of the Colorectal Cancer Screening Programme:



References:

Cancer Online Resource Hub
Centre for Health Protection,
Department of Health

The above information
is for reference only.

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