

# Colorectal Cancer Alliance State of Screening Study Reveals Potentially Fatal Attitudes & Misconceptions

*Majority of Americans Say They Don't Have Time for Colorectal Cancer Screening, Prioritizing Household Chores Instead of Their Health*

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*Christopher Lieu, M.D.*

Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month begins this March, new survey data commissioned by the [Colorectal Cancer Alliance](#) (Alliance) and conducted by Wakefield Research reveals a troubling reality: More than half of U.S. adults (51%) prioritize household chores, such as laundry and childcare, over life-saving colorectal (colon and rectal) cancer screenings. In addition, 69% say they would rather file their taxes than get a colonoscopy. While most people

understand that colonoscopies can detect cancer, according to the survey of 1,000 Americans, 57% are unaware that these screenings can actually prevent colorectal cancer by removing precancerous polyps. If Americans knew this, 98% reported they would be more likely to undergo the screening. With colorectal cancer cases rising in younger adults, these startling statistics underscore the urgent need for increased awareness and education surrounding prevention and the importance of timely screening.

"These results reveal a life-threatening gap in public awareness of colorectal cancer," said Christopher Lieu, M.D., medical oncologist and advisor to the Colorectal Cancer Alliance. "Colorectal cancer is the second deadliest cancer among men and women, and incidence is rising in younger people. It's imperative that everyone understands the importance of screening and makes it a priority, so more lives can be saved."

## Everyday Life vs. Life-Saving Screenings

The daily grind appears to be a major barrier to screening. Close to one in five people (18%) whose doctor recommended they get screened opt not to do so. Among these adults, 72% admit to letting everyday tasks keep them from getting these important health tests. Parents, in particular, struggle to prioritize their own health, with 60% admitting that daily responsibilities prevent them from getting screened, compared to 46% of non-parents.

People with busy schedules and at average risk of colorectal cancer can choose from a variety of screening options that are convenient, quick and easy, including at-home stool tests like Cologuard and FIT that are widely covered by insurance. A newly FDA approved blood-based test is available for Medicare patients, but it is not yet recommended in the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) guidelines. A doctor can provide advice on screening tests based on age, personal preference, risk factors and symptoms.

#### Fear and Stigma: Psychological Barriers to Screening

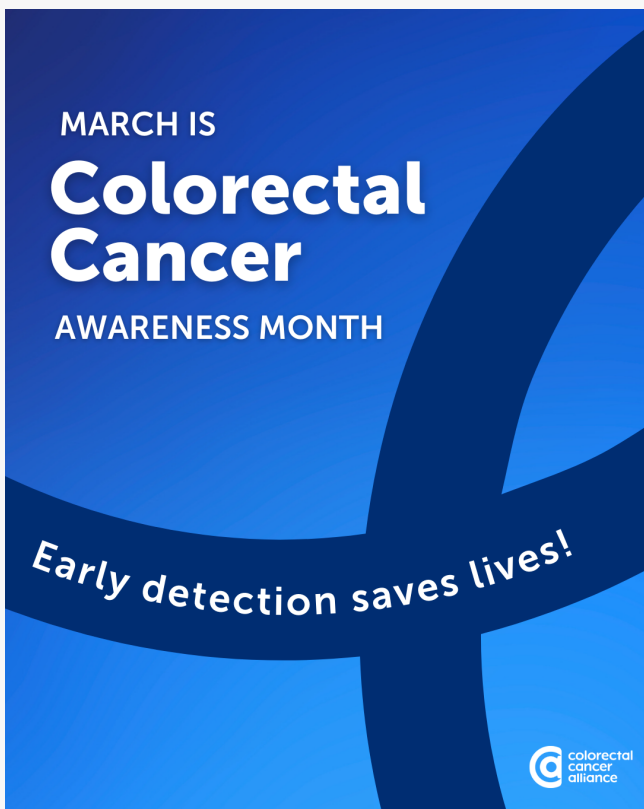
While the benefits of screening are well-documented, there are some psychological reasons that prevent people from signing up. More than a third of adults who haven't been screened (36%) are simply afraid. But in reality, it is not that bad – only 17% of those who have already been screened would let fear about the experience keep them from doing so again. Additionally, 17% of unscreened individuals avoid colorectal screenings simply because they find the process unpleasant. Timely screening can help avoid the drastically unpleasant process of cancer treatment.

#### The Knowledge Gap: What Americans Don't Know Could Hurt Them

While colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the U.S., the majority (63%) of adults don't know that it is now the leading cause of cancer death among men under 50. Even more concerning, 58% don't know that colorectal cancer is one of the most preventable cancers, with only 26% of those under 45 aware of this fact. Compounding the misconceptions, 61% incorrectly believe that screening should begin at age 50, when in fact the recommended screening age is 45 or sooner for those at high risk or experiencing symptoms. Although colorectal screenings should begin at age 45, about 32% of those at or above this age have not been screened.


#### Red Flags: Know the Signs and Talk with Your Doctor

Fewer than half of adults (47%) recognize that colorectal cancer is often not detected until the later stages because symptoms are mild. However, changes in bowel habits can be a sign that something is wrong. Alarming, 58% of adults would not immediately seek medical attention if they noticed constipation, diarrhea or blood in their stool. This includes a third (33%) who wouldn't even bring it up at their next appointment, which can be a deadly mistake. Colorectal



MARCH IS  
**Colorectal  
Cancer**  
AWARENESS MONTH

Early detection saves lives!

 colorectal  
cancer  
alliance

Colorectal Cancer Alliance urges screening to save lives during March for National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month.

cancer has a 91% survival rate when caught early, but survival drops to 15% when a patient is diagnosed with advanced cancer.

“Colorectal cancer is highly preventable, yet too many Americans delay or avoid screening due to fear, misinformation or competing priorities,” said Michael Sapienza, CEO of the Colorectal Cancer Alliance. “The Alliance urges all Americans to learn about colorectal cancer risk factors, symptoms and screening options during March awareness month. It could save your life.”

#### Take Action: Learn the Risk Factors and Get Screened

Colorectal cancer risk factors include a family history of colorectal cancer; certain inherited genetic syndromes like Lynch syndrome; chronic inflammatory bowel diseases, such as ulcerative colitis or Crohn’s disease; and type 2 diabetes. Race can be a risk factor, too. Alaska Natives have the highest rate of colorectal cancer incidence and death, while Black Americans are 35% more likely to die from colorectal cancer and 15% more likely to develop it than non-Hispanic whites. Symptoms to look for include a change in bowel habits, rectal bleeding, abdominal discomfort, weakness and/or fatigue and unexplained weight loss.

For more information, the Alliance offers a free, easy quiz at [getscreened.org](https://getscreened.org) that provides a screening recommendation based on personal risk factors. To get involved and help End Colon Cancer Coast to Coast visit <https://bit.ly/Coast-to-Coast-25>.

#### About the Colorectal Cancer Alliance

The Colorectal Cancer Alliance empowers a nation of passionate and determined allies to prevent, treat and overcome colorectal cancer in their lives and communities. Founded in 1999 and headquartered in Washington, D.C., the Alliance advocates for prevention through initiatives like LEAD FROM BEHIND, magnifies support with BlueHQ and accelerates research through Project Cure CRC. We are the largest national nonprofit dedicated to colorectal cancer, and we exist to end this disease in our lifetime. For more information, visit [colorectalcaner.org](https://colorectalcaner.org).

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