Pacific Islanders & Colorectal Cancer

Colorectal Cancer is Very Common among Pacific Islanders

**Understanding Colorectal Cancer**
- **Colon**: First 4-5 feet of intestine
- **Rectum**: Last few inches of intestine
- **Cancer**: Uncontrolled cell growth
- **Colorectal Cancer**: Cancer that starts in colon or rectum
  - **Benign tumors**: NOT cancer
  - **Malignant tumors**: are cancer

**Risk Factors**
- Age
- Colorectal Polyps
- Family History of Colorectal Cancer
- Personal History of Cancer
- Differences in Genetic Makeup
- Irritation or Inflammation of Lining of Colon or Rectum
- Diet high in Animal Fat
- Cigarette Smoking

**Symptoms**
- Diarrhea or Constipation
- Finding Blood (bright red or very dark/black) in Your Stool
- Finding Your Stools are Narrower than Usual
- Regular Gas Pains or Cramps, or Feeling Full or Bloated
- Losing Weight with No Known Reason
- Feeling Very Tired All the Time
- Having Nausea or Vomiting
- NO SYMPTOMS AT ALL

**Prevention**
Some studies suggest people may reduce their risk of developing colorectal cancer by:
- Increasing Physical Activity
- Eating Fruits & Vegetables (breadfruit, taro, cabbage, mango, papaya)
- Limiting Alcohol Consumption
- Avoiding Tobacco/Cigarette Smoking
Screening Tests

- **Fecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT):** **Annually, starting at age 50.** A test to check for hidden blood in the stool. Patient puts small piece of stool on a test card & returns to doctor for analysis

- **Double-Contrast Barium Enema:** **Every 5 years, starting at age 50.** An x-ray of the colon

- **Sigmoidoscopy:** **Every 5 years, starting at age 50.** A method of looking at part of the colon

- **Colonoscopy:** **Every 10 years, starting at age 50.** A method of looking at the entire colon

Ask Your Doctor
You may want to ask your doctor the following questions about screening:

- Which tests are recommended for me? Why?
- How much do the tests cost? Will my health insurance plan help pay for screening tests?
- Are the tests painful?
- How soon after the tests will I learn the results?

Other Resources

- National Cancer Institute Helpline: [www.cancer.gov/help](http://www.cancer.gov/help) or 1-800-4-CANCER
- American Cancer Society [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) or 1-800-ACS-2345