

Colorectal cancer

Colorectal cancer is the 2nd commonest cancer in Hong Kong. It accounted for 3706 new cases in 2005, and has an upward trend in the past 20 years. Most cases are age 50 and above, and men are 1.3 more likely to have colorectal cancer than women.

Common symptoms of colorectal cancer include:

- sudden change in bowel habit (diarrhoea, constipation, narrowing of stool, feeling of not having emptied your bowel properly after a bowel motion. etc.),
- blood or copious mucus in stool
- anaemia
- weight loss

It is well known that apart from the less common association with some hereditary bowel diseases (e.g., familial adenomatous polyposis) and chronic intestinal disorders (e.g., ulcerative colitis), colorectal cancer is very much related to our daily lifestyles.

Therefore, in order to prevent colorectal cancer, it is very important to have the following:

- Have a balanced diet
 - o with plenty of fruits and vegetables, which are high in fibre content,
 - o decrease red meat intake and other foods with high fat content,
- Undertake regular exercises (3 hours of brisk walking per week)
 - o exercises will help bowel movement, and decrease the chance of bowel wall being in contact with carcinogens.
- Maintain an ideal body weight
- Quit smoking

Early Screening is also important, especially for the high risk >50years old, as this cancer in its early stage has a relatively high cure rate. Screening such as the below are suggested:

- Stool occult blood test
- Blood cancer marker (CEA)
- Sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy (most accurate but invasive)

If proven to have colorectal cancer, surgery is the main treatment option, with some patients requiring chemotherapy or radiotherapy to decrease chances of recurrence.

Though very common, colorectal cancer is one that can be easily prevented and treated in early stages. One should be vigilant in screening and looking out for any early symptoms, to have a good eating and bowel habit, and to seek medical advice early and be treated early.



Source: Dr Grace Loy, Blue Care Medical Centre