



March News

What you should know about Colon Cancer

March is **Colon Cancer Awareness** month! Colon cancer is currently the **#2 cancer killer** of men and women in Canada. However, 90% of cases are treatable if caught early. Find out what you should know to fight back against this disease.

What is colon cancer?

Most colon cancers start in the cells that line the large bowel (colon and rectum). Initially, these growths or polyps are usually benign and can easily be removed. However, if left these growths can become cancerous. Colon cancer usually grows slowly and in a predictable way. **It is curable when diagnosed at an early stage.**

What factors increase the risk of developing colon cancer?

- Age > 50 years old
- Having polyps
- Family history in a parent sibling or child before the age of 45
- Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) (ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease)
- Diet high in red meat
- Diet high in processed meat (ham, sausage, hot dogs)
- Alcohol consumption
- Smoking
- Physical inactivity
- Obesity

Some people develop colon cancer without having any of these risk factors.

Is there anything I can do to lower my risk?

It has been shown that a diet high in vegetables and fruit will decrease your risk. A diet high in fiber and low in animal fats may also decrease risk, but more research is necessary to prove this.

Symptoms of Colon Cancer

Possible symptoms include:

- A change in bowel habits
- Blood in the stool (bright red or dark)
- Diarrhea, constipation or feeling that the bowel does not empty completely
- Stools that are narrower than usual
- Unexplained weight loss
- Abdominal discomfort (gas pains, bloating)
- Vomiting

Keep in mind other minor problems can cause some of these symptoms. Testing is required to make a diagnosis and a doctor should be seen if any of these symptoms arise!



How do we screen for colon cancer?

There are two types of screening tests that are used to detect colon cancer.

The fecal occult blood test (FOBT) tests for blood within the stool. This test is completed at home over the course of 3 days and then returned to a lab.

A colonoscopy is a procedure which enables the physician to view the inside of the colon with a camera. Prior to a colonoscopy, the bowel must be emptied using over the counter medications. Your pharmacist can help you locate these products within the store and give helpful advice on how to use them.

Who should be screened for colon cancer and how often?

Average risk individuals should begin to have a FOBT at the age of 50. This test should be completed every 2 years. Stool tests help to identify polyps before they become cancerous.

High risk individuals (those with a first degree relative with colon cancer, those with IBD, or those with polyps) should discuss an individual monitoring plan with their doctor. These individuals **require more frequent screening.**

Ask your pharmacist for more information on colon cancer today!

Rx Center— What makes a prescription a prescription?

What is a prescription?

A prescription is a [legal document](#), and therefore must have certain information contained on it to make it such. The following components must be on a prescription:

- Date the prescription was written
- Name and address of the patient
- Name of drug or drug product
- Strength of drug and dosage form
- Route of administration
- Quantity to be dispensed
- Instructions for use
- Number of refills, if any
- The prescriber's name and

phone number

- The prescriber's signature

How long is a prescription valid



for?

The prescription is valid for 1 year from the date that it was written.

Can I photocopy my prescription for personal use?

No. A prescription can not be cop-

ied unless done so by a pharmacist. The pharmacist must place appropriate stamps and notes on a copied prescription and sign the copy.

The doctor wrote the prescription on a large piece of paper, can I trim the edges?

No. The paper the doctor wrote on should not be altered in any way. The prescription is your doctor's communication to the pharmacist.

The doctor made a mistake, can I write on my prescription or cross something out if I don't need it?

No. If there is a mistake, notify the pharmacist and they will contact the doctor to have it corrected. Altering a legal document, such as a prescription is considered forgery.

Supplement Spotlight— Probiotics

Did you know that your intestines are home to billions of health promoting bacteria?!

What are probiotics?

Probiotics are friendly bacteria that beneficially affect the balance of bacteria that already exist in your intestines!

How can I supplement with probiotics?

Probiotics are found in certain types of yogurt. If you want to supplement with probiotics ensure that the yogurt label reads "contains active cultures". Many yogurts make this claim however, the only yogurt that has been tested in human clinical trials is DANONE Activia® yogurt.

The amount of bacteria in yogurt is likely not enough for patients who require supplementation. There

are many over-the-counter probiotic supplements in capsule form that contain much higher counts of bacteria that are used to treat certain condition.

Are there side effects to supplementing with Probiotics?

Probiotics may initially cause mild flatulence, which should subside with continued use.

If there are good bacteria in my gut, why do I need to supplement with more?

There are many things that can decrease the amount of good bacteria in your guts causing you problems. Some factors negatively impact your bacteria are:

- Use of Antibiotics
- Stress
- Travelling

- Diseases (such as irritable bowel, Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis)

Who should consider supplementing with Probiotics?

Patients who are prescribed antibiotics may want to take probiotics during, as well as for a few weeks after, their course of antibiotic therapy. This can prevent some side effects such as diarrhea or fungal infections from occurring. Others who may want to consider supplementation are those struggling with constipation or diarrhea, people with the "stomach flu", those traveling to foreign countries, those with diseases such as those listed previously, and many more!

Ask your pharmacist today if probiotic supplements are right for you!

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