



# The Training Brief

Quick Reference mini-training Topics  
**Colon Cancer**

*The purpose of this training topic is to understand the signs and symptoms of Colon Cancer. Firefighters have a 1.21 greater times risk of getting Colon Cancer than the general public.*

## **Discussion**

**Fact:** Firefighters have an 1.21 greater times risk of getting Colon Cancer than the general public.

**Key Points:** In 2013 the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) published the results of study of firefighters and cancer rates. The results showed firefighters have an increased rate for a number of cancers. Colon cancer is one of them.

In addition to the NIOSH report, the 2006 "LeMasters Cancer Risk Among Firefighters: A Review and Meta-analysis of 32 Studies" It was found that there is an increased risk of colon cancer among firefighters.

There have been numerous other studies that show similar results.

**Action:** It cannot be understated about the importance of annual medical exams.

Download and bring the form to your Physician:

[https://firefightercancersupport.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Primary-care-cancer-evaluations-for-firefighters\\_HamrockMD\\_2016\\_FCSN.pdf](https://firefightercancersupport.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Primary-care-cancer-evaluations-for-firefighters_HamrockMD_2016_FCSN.pdf)

Download and print the form. Bring it to your primary care physician. Discuss the risks firefighters have in regards to occupational cancer.

**Make the necessary changes**

Colorectal cancer starts in the colon or the rectum. These cancers can also be called colon cancer or rectal cancer, depending on where they start. Most colorectal cancers start as a growth on the inner lining of the colon or rectum. These growths are called polyps.

## **Signs and Symptoms:**

- A change in bowel habits, such as diarrhea, constipation, or narrowing of the stool, that lasts for more than a few days
- A feeling that you need to have a bowel movement that's not relieved by having one
- Rectal bleeding with bright red blood
- Blood in the stool, which might make the stool look dark brown or black
- Cramping or abdominal (belly) pain
- Weakness and fatigue
- Unintended weight loss

Colorectal cancers can often bleed into the digestive tract. Sometimes the blood can be seen in the stool or make it look darker, but often the stool looks normal. But over time, the blood loss can build up and can lead to low red blood cell counts (anemia). Sometimes the first sign of colorectal cancer is a blood test showing a low red blood cell count.

## **Modifiable Risk Factors:**

- Being overweight or obese
- Not being physically active
- A diet high in red meat, and processed meats.
- Having a low blood level of vitamin D may also increase your risk.
- Smoking tobacco products
- Moderate to heavy alcohol use.

## **Screening for Colorectal Cancer:**

Screening is the process of looking for cancer or pre-cancer in people who have no symptoms of the disease. Regular colorectal cancer screening is one of the most powerful tools for preventing colorectal cancer.

The American Cancer Society recommends If you're age 45 or older, you should start getting screened for colorectal cancer.

Firefighters are at a higher risk than the general public for colorectal cancer. It is recommended to do a colonoscopy starting at age **40 and every 5 years after.**

Source: American Cancer Society