

**Gastrointestinal  
Tumor *Risk*  
Assessment  
Program**



**For Men & Women**  
with a Personal or Family History  
of Gastrointestinal Cancer

**FOX CHASE**  
CANCER CENTER

## What This Program Can Do for You

The Gastrointestinal Tumor Risk Assessment Program can help you benefit from present and future knowledge about cancer risks. Our staff is dedicated to helping people prevent gastrointestinal cancers by understanding their personal and family risk and learning ways to reduce it.

**Gastrointestinal cancers include tumors affecting the follow sites in the body:**



Colon  
(large intestine or bowel)

Rectum

Stomach

Small Intestine

Pancreas

Esophagus

Liver

Bile Duct

We can develop a personal screening plan for you to help detect conditions such as colon polyps that may lead to cancer, or to detect a cancer at the earliest, most treatable stage. Polyps are small, noncancerous growths in the colon or rectum. If left untreated, some polyps may become cancerous tumors. Periodic screening can detect polyps. Most are easily removed during a diagnostic procedure called a colonoscopy.

## Your Risk of Gastrointestinal Cancer

The Gastrointestinal Tumor Risk Assessment Program is designed for people at high risk of colon or other gastrointestinal cancers because of personal or family medical history.

Gastrointestinal cancers sometimes run in families. People whose close relatives have had colorectal cancer or colon polyps may have inherited a genetic variation that increases their risk of developing gastrointestinal cancers. Scientists at Fox Chase Cancer Center and elsewhere are working to understand the genes involved in this hereditary susceptibility.

Other factors that increase a person's risk of gastrointestinal cancer include a personal history of this cancer, gastrointestinal polyps and/or an inflammatory bowel disease, such as ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease.

Being at risk does not mean that you will definitely develop cancer. Rather, your chances of developing a cancer are greater than those of someone who has no personal or family history of the diseases or other special risk factors. There are ways you and your family can reduce this risk.

**You may be eligible for the Gastrointestinal Tumor Risk Assessment Program if you are at least 18 years old and have one of the following risk factors:**

- at least one first-degree family member (parent, brother, sister or child) who has had gastrointestinal cancer;
- a personal history of gastrointestinal cancer;
- a personal history of colon or rectal polyps.

Participants in the Gastrointestinal Tumor Risk Assessment Program receive education, genetic counseling and recommendations for screening.

## Benefits of Participation



## When you enroll you will receive the following services:

- education regarding known and suspected risk factors for gastrointestinal cancer and a detailed evaluation of family history by a genetic counselor;
- an explanation of screening guidelines and prevention options;
- a personal screening plan with recommendations tailored to your needs;
- an opportunity to participate in a cancer risk registry or other cancer prevention research studies.

## Family and Genetic Counseling

Having a family history of gastrointestinal cancer may increase one's risk of developing cancers of the gastrointestinal tract and other types of cancers as well. Approximately 5-10% of colon cancer is caused by known genetic changes that can be passed down from one generation to the next. Other risk factors involve environmental factors and personal lifestyle, such as a diet high in animal fat.

The counseling team will explain the various risk factors, how they might affect you and what you can do to reduce your risk. Depending on your family history, counseling may include recommendations on what age other family members should start being screened for gastrointestinal cancers.

The genetic counselor will discuss current research to identify the genes involved in hereditary risks and ways eligible clients may participate in such studies. Some genes involved in cancer of the colon and rectum have already been identified. For those eligible, genetic testing is available.

## Recommendations

for colon cancer screening may include a colonoscopy. This procedure uses a flexible tube that lets the physician view the inside of the colon. The instrument transmits images of the colon to a video monitor in the exam room, permitting the most precise diagnosis and location of any polyps or cancers.

## Screening Recommendations

**You may choose to have your screening at Fox Chase or by your own gastroenterologist.**

## Gastrointestinal Cancer Prevention Research

The staff of the Gastrointestinal Tumor Risk Assessment Program includes medical oncologists, genetic

counselors, gastroenterologists and a variety of clinical and basic scientists. Fox Chase Cancer Center scientists are working to determine the causes of gastrointestinal cancer, ways to prevent it and the best screening methods to detect cancers and precancerous conditions early.

You can contribute to this research simply by giving a small blood sample as part of our registry for high-risk people. You may also have the option of participating in various cancer prevention studies that may be available.

### Some Facts About Gastrointestinal Cancer

Colorectal, stomach (also called gastric) and pancreatic cancers are the most common gastrointestinal cancers among Americans.



## Colorectal Cancer

Approximately 150,000 Americans a year learn they have cancer of the colon or rectum. These cancers affect men and women almost equally.

The third most common cancer in both men and women in this country, colorectal cancer causes approximately 50,000 deaths a year. It is the second leading cause of cancer deaths, after lung cancer. With early detection, however, the five-year survival rate for colon cancer is more than 90 percent.

Each year about 22,000 cases of stomach cancer are diagnosed in this country, and approximately 11,000 Americans die of this disease annually. Approximately 38,000 Americans a year develop pancreatic cancer and about 34,000 die of it. We will develop a personalized surveillance plan for individuals with high risk for these cancers.

Cigarette smoking is the major risk factor for stomach and pancreatic cancers. As with most adult cancers, the risk increases with age.

## Stomach and Pancreatic Cancer

# Gastrointestinal Cancer Symptoms

Gastrointestinal cancers often produce few or no symptoms until late stages. For colorectal cancer, symptoms may include (but are not limited to):

- rectal bleeding
- a change in bowel habits
- abdominal pain

With pancreatic or stomach cancer, symptoms may include:

- ulcer-like symptoms
- back pain
- bloating

Regular check-ups are important. These cancers are curable if detected early.

For information about the Gastrointestinal Tumor Risk Assessment Program and to learn if you are eligible, please call 215-728-7041 or 1-888-FOX CHASE (1-888-369-2427) on weekdays.

**FOX CHASE**  
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