



# COLORECTAL CANCER SCREENINGS SAVE LIVES

The American Cancer Society estimated the number of colorectal cancer cases in the United States for 2022 would reach approximately 151,000, leading to more than 53,000 deaths.

**A**akash Gajjar, MD, a colorectal surgeon affiliated with Memorial Hermann Sugar Land Hospital, has witnessed an increased incidence of colorectal cancer among people younger than 50 and urges colorectal screening at age 45 for most people. “As much as 31% of those eligible for screening aren’t getting screened for various reasons, including fear or embarrassment,” he said.

While colonoscopy remains the gold standard for screening, there are other screening options available. These include fecal immunochemical tests (FITs) that can detect blood in the stool or stool DNA tests that detect blood and abnormal cells. For tests performed at home, any positive results, Dr. Gajjar says, must be evaluated with a colonoscopy. CT colonography of the colon has also proven effective in finding abnormalities but must

also be followed by a colonoscopy when abnormalities are detected.

Dr. Gajjar advises reporting the following symptoms to your doctor:

- Bright-red or dark, tarry stools
- Changes in the frequency of bowel movements or the consistency of stools, especially if “pencil-like”
- Abdominal pain
- Unexplained weight loss

“Early detection of colorectal cancer can be lifesaving,” Dr. Gajjar said.

Memorial Hermann The Woodlands Medical Center, Memorial Hermann Southeast Hospital and Memorial Hermann Northeast Hospital are accredited by the National Accreditation Program for Rectal Cancer. Additionally, Memorial Hermann has Oncology Nurse Navigators who help guide patients with rectal cancer through their care journey.



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For more information, visit  
[MemorialHermann.org/colonoscopy](https://www.MemorialHermann.org/colonoscopy)