

THE INSIDE TRACT

YOU'VE HEARD IT SAID BEFORE:
"30 is the new 21" or "40 is the new 30." What's going on when science says "45 is the new 50?"



When it comes to colorectal cancer risk, 45 is indeed the new 50. Recent research has found that colorectal cancer diagnoses in people under 55 are on the rise—with a two-fold increase among the 20 to 49 age group. These findings have led the American Cancer Society to lower its recommendation for first-time colon cancer screenings from age 50 to age 45.

Are People Aging Faster? It's the million dollar question—why are so many more young people being afflicted with this disease, which was once relegated primarily to the 50 and up crowd? Experts speculate that too little exercise, too much processed food, and high rates of obesity are contributing to the new trends in colorectal cancer. Others theorize that these poor lifestyle habits are causing unwelcome changes to the microbiome—the trillions of bacteria that make up the human gut. Evolutionary changes to the human diet have caused some of the good or protective bacteria to die off, leaving many people unprotected from the bad bacteria, including some species linked to colon cancer.

Have You Been Misdiagnosed? Recent study reviews have found that people younger than 55 are 58 percent more likely to be diagnosed with late-stage colorectal cancer. That's a scary thought, especially considering that many younger patients are symptomatic and have gone from doctor to doctor seeking answers.

The reasons for delayed diagnoses in younger patients are numerous, but most commonly cited is the high volume of patients who are misdiagnosed by their general practitioners or urgent care clinics after complaining of lower abdominal distress and discomfort. Many were sent home with little more than basic instructions to remedy a stomach bug or treat mild irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). However, for a growing segment of the population—those under the age of 55—colorectal cancer is a very real possibility.



A study conducted by the University of Arizona at Tucson found that currently, 30 percent of colorectal cancer cases are diagnosed in people under 50. The same study uncovered that more women than men are affected in this age group. A whopping 62 percent of cases were diagnosed in women, while only 39 percent of younger men were diagnosed. This is a stark contrast to trends in colorectal cancer cases seen in the older population, where a majority of diagnoses are in men.

Several other trends emerged from the study, including that the majority of cases under 50 were diagnosed in patients who were white, obese, and use alcohol. Despite these trends, the most glaring data showed that when younger patients present with symptoms, physicians are more likely to treat for IBS or another GI-related disease. Most general practitioners are not expecting to see colon cancer in populations under 50, which leads to more late stage diagnoses in younger patients.

News outlets have reported on story after story where young patients had to push for more testing to be taken seriously, often bouncing from doctor to doctor. A New York Times article told the story of a 22-year-old whose mother begged doctors to run additional tests when symptoms persisted. After a flexible sigmoidoscopy (which is similar to a colonoscopy but offers a more thorough examination of the lower colon), she was diagnosed with colon cancer, and the doctor who performed the procedure was astounded. He said, "I would never have guessed that a 22-year-old would have had cancer."

A review published in World Journal of Gastrointestinal Oncology examined the pitfalls in the diagnostic procedure for colorectal cancer (CRC) in symptomatic patients. The authors of the review stated, "...the early diagnosis of CRC in symptomatic patients remains a problem. It is a complex process that begins when the patient detects the first symptoms until a diagnostic procedure is performed, undergoing a consultation with a general practitioner, a referral to the specialist, and the waiting period for diagnostic procedures, such as colonoscopy." A colonoscopy is often not the first test general practitioners order when symptoms present in young patients, even though it has been dubbed the "gold standard" of colon cancer detection and prevention.

Can Colon Cancer be Prevented?

The good news is that colorectal cancer is highly preventable and can even be cured when detected early. That's why the American Cancer Society has stepped up to recommend 45 years old as the new first-time colon cancer screening age*.

You don't have to wait on your medical team to be proactive yourself. Don't ignore symptoms. Listen to your body. Keep pushing for more tests and more answers. Waiting only puts your health—and your life—at greater risk.

If you're at risk, early detection means early treatment and prevention, which means a colonoscopy could save your life. The expert gastroenterologists at North Texas Endoscopy Centers exceed industry benchmarks for quality and safety, and the medical team is specially trained in endoscopic care. North Texas Endoscopy Centers offer the highest quality care to maximize healthy outcomes.

GET SCHEDULED TO GET SCREENED FOR COLON CANCER
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**Contact your insurance provider to learn more about eligibility to get screened at age 45 per the new recommendations by the American Cancer Society.*

WHY FITNESS STILL MATTERS IN YOUR FORTIES (AND BEYOND)



With the new recommended screening age for colon cancer dropping to age 45, you may be wondering what you can do to protect your health as you age. Life can get very busy for 40-somethings. Whether it is securing a higher rung on the ladder at work or making sure your kids arrive on time to every soccer practice dance recital (or both), you have little time to focus on you. But routine fitness has to be part of your self-care.

In fact, experts say that declines in muscle and bone mass that begin in your thirties can quickly become detrimental to your health in your forties if you don't exercise. Exercise is also vital to warding off diseases like cancer. The key is to make sure you mix up your routine; include weight bearing exercises with stretching and moderate cardio. Yoga, Pilates, biking, hiking, or even a brisk walk with weights can make a significant difference in your health.

If you have let your exercise routine slide for months—or even years—don't worry, your body will remember. It may take you a bit more time to recover, but research shows that active 65-year-olds have more strength than sedentary 20-somethings.

Better health doesn't happen overnight. Take baby steps, enlist support and encouragement from friends/family/coworkers, and don't give up on healthier living!

References

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RECIPE: CHICKEN BELL PEPPER MINI PIZZAS

From StopColonCancerNow.com

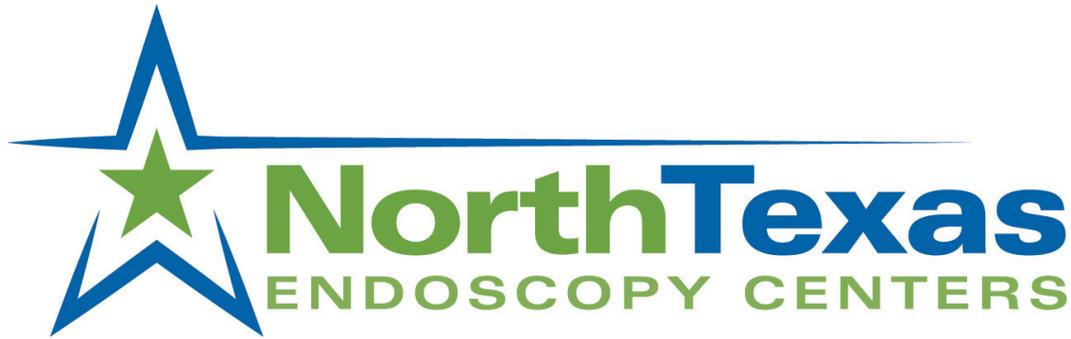
One key to a better colon health is eating lots of colorful vegetables. Bell peppers are rich in flavor and each color provides a power punch of various antioxidants and much-needed fiber. You can boost your intake of fiber and healthy nutrients with this colorful bell pepper mini pizza recipe.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 bell peppers (yellow, red, orange, green)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup pasta sauce
- 2 teaspoons grapeseed oil
- 3 tablespoons diced red onion
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 1 chicken breast, cut into small pieces
- Dash of sea salt and pepper
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped fresh kale
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1 teaspoon dried Italian seasoning

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350. Place parchment paper on the inside of a 10x15-inch pan.
2. With each pepper standing up, cut off the two opposite sides of the pepper (on either side of the stem), and remove any seeds. Place these pepper slices on the pan with skin down.
3. Spread 2-3 tablespoons of pasta sauce inside each slice of pepper.



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