

# Hong Kong residents aged 50 to 75 urged to undergo regular colorectal cancer screening tests

The Department of Health (DH) today (March 21) urged members of the public to support Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month through adopting a healthy lifestyle and undergoing regular screenings with a view to preventing colorectal cancer.

Colorectal cancer is the second-most common and deadly cancer locally. In 2021, there were 5 899 newly diagnosed colorectal cancer cases, accounting for 15.3 per cent of all new cancer cases. In 2022, colorectal cancer resulted in 2 270 deaths, accounting for 15.4 per cent of all cancer deaths.

Asymptomatic Hong Kong residents aged between 50 and 75 are encouraged to join the Government's Colorectal Cancer Screening Programme (CRCSP). The CRCSP has been operating smoothly since its launch in 2016. The CRCSP has served to identify those who have colorectal cancer before they present with symptoms, or individuals at increased risk of colorectal cancer, enabling them to receive early treatment. With colorectal adenoma removed in the course of colonoscopy, these lesions are also prevented from turning into cancer. The screening pathway comprises two stages:

(1) Eligible persons should make an appointment with a primary care doctor (PCD) participating in the CRCSP for assessment and arrangement of a Faecal Immunochemical Test (FIT); and

(2) If the FIT result is positive, the participant will be referred to a colonoscopy specialist enrolled in the CRCSP to receive a Government-subsidised colonoscopy examination. If the FIT result is negative, participants should attend a rescreening after two years.

The CRCSP is heavily subsidised by the Government. As of the end of 2023, around 1 040 PCDs have successfully enrolled in the CRCSP covering nearly 1 960 locations, and over 90 per cent of these PCDs will not charge any additional payment. In addition, around 240 colonoscopy specialists have joined the CRCSP to provide colonoscopy examination services at around 770 service locations, and over 70 per cent of which do not require additional payment for colonoscopy and polyp removal if necessary.

As of the end of 2023, over 420 000 eligible persons had participated in the CRCSP. Among the participants who had submitted FIT tube samples with analysable results, around 63 900 persons (around 16.3 per cent) had positive results. Since the launch of the CRCSP, over 2 900 cases of colorectal cancer and 33 000 cases of colorectal adenoma have been diagnosed through the CRCSP. Around 57 per cent of colorectal cancer cases diagnosed through the CRCSP belonged to earlier stages (Stage 2 or below), and therefore had a more favourable prognosis.

A spokesman for the DH called on eligible persons to join the CRCSP starting from the age of 50 and prevent colorectal cancer by leading a healthy lifestyle including exercising regularly, eating two servings of fruit and three servings of vegetables daily, reducing consumption of red meat and processed meat, maintaining a healthy body weight, and saying no to smoking and alcohol. Participants are also encouraged to bring along eligible relatives and friends to join the CRCSP.

â€œFor more information on the CRCSP (including eligibility criteria and the list of PCDs), please visit the DH's thematic website [www.colonscreen.gov.hk](http://www.colonscreen.gov.hk), or call 3565 6288 during office hours.