

Colon Health for Women

Your colon, which is part of the large intestine, is a five-foot-long U-shaped tube of muscle found below the stomach. Using involuntary muscle contractions, digested material is pushed through the colon, where it is stored as waste until it's time to be excreted. In forming the waste into stool for excretion, the colon removes water, salt and some nutrients for use throughout the body.

If you don't take proper care of your colon, a buildup of waste can collect on your intestinal walls creating a harmful environment where toxic pathogens thrive. This can lead to a variety of illnesses and diseases including irritable bowel syndrome, colon polyps, colon cancer, and many others. Colorectal cancer is the third most commonly diagnosed cancer in both women and men, according to the American Cancer Society. Maintaining a healthy colon plays an important role in your overall health.

Ways to keep your colon healthy

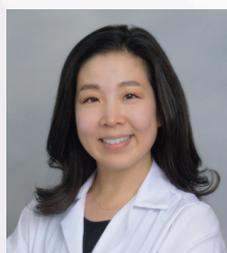
It's never too late to start taking care of your colon. Here are a few simple things you can do to take control of your colon health:

- 1. Eat healthy.** Maintain a high-fiber diet by incorporating whole grains, healthy fats, and plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- 2. Exercise.** 30 minutes of exercise during most days of the week is a great way to maintain a healthy heart and weight—and decrease your risk for some cancers, including colon cancer.
- 3. Do not smoke.** If you smoke, quit. Talk to your doctor about smoking cessation programs that can help.
- 4. Limit alcohol consumption.** Women who choose to drink alcohol should do so in moderation, meaning no more than one drink a day.

- 5. Get your screening!** According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, adults age 50 – 75 should be screened for colorectal cancer, and U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recently issued an updated recommendation that colorectal cancer screening should begin as early as age 45. Your doctor will help you decide which screening tool is most appropriate for you based on your age, family history and risk factors.

*As always, please consult with your doctor before making changes to your lifestyle that may impact your overall health.

Meet Dr. Esther H. Cha



Esther H. Cha, MD, is a board-certified colorectal surgeon specializing in minimally invasive surgical techniques including laparoscopic, robotic and endoscopic surgeries. She performs colorectal surgical procedures for benign and

malignant disease, including techniques in transanal minimally invasive surgery for sphincter preservation and surgery for inflammatory bowel disease. She is fluent in English and Korean.

Schedule an Appointment

St. Mary Surgical Associates Langhorne

1205 Langhorne-Newtown Road
Franciscan Building, Suite 310
Langhorne, PA 19047
215.710.6613

Healthy Colon Checklist:

Go through the checklist below. A person with a healthy colon will most likely check off each of the items as a "yes" response. If you answer "no" to any of the questions, talk to your doctor.

- Clear skin without blemishes
- Consistent daily elimination
- Mild-smelling breath
- No mucous, partially digested food, or blood visible in your stools
- Time between elimination is 18 – 24 hours
- A large bowel movement in the morning
- A smaller bowel movement in the afternoon
- No trouble expelling stools
- Stools are soft and well-formed (normally in a tube-shape)



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