

# Blacks and Latinos Have Higher Colon Cancer Risk

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African Americans and Latinos are far more likely than whites to develop polyps in the colon that can lead to cancer, according to a study published in the journal *Alimentary Pharmacology and Therapeutics* and reported by [Columbia University Medical Center](#).

A polyp in the colon is called a colorectal polyp. It is a growth along the lining of the colon or rectum and is usually benign, but some can lead to cancer.

For the study, researchers at Columbia University examined data from more than 5,000 men and women older than 50 who received a first-time colonoscopy screening at New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia University Medical Center in New York City between 2006 and 2010. None of the study participants had signs or symptoms of colorectal cancer.

Scientists found that doctors detected precancerous polyps in 26 percent of blacks, 22 percent of Latinos and 19 percent of whites. Findings also showed that blacks and Latinos were more likely to develop polyps in the upper part of the colon.

“These lesions would have been missed had these patients undergone sigmoidoscopy, which examines only the lower half of the colon,” said Benjamin Lebwohl, MD, MS, an assistant professor of clinical medicine and epidemiology at Columbia, and the lead study author. “Therefore, colonoscopy, which examines the entire colon, may be preferable to sigmoidoscopy as a screening test for blacks and Hispanics.”

These findings are contrary to current statistics that show minorities have a lower rate of colon cancer than whites.

What this means, Lebwohl said, is that doctors need to double their efforts to increase colon cancer screening in areas with large numbers of racial and ethnic minorities.

Did you know more blacks die of colon cancer than their white counterparts? [Click here](#) to learn more.

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