

World Health Day - Listen to your gut

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The [Cancer Association of South Africa \(CANSAS\)](#) emphasises the importance of colorectal health on World Health Day (7 April). [Colorectal cancer](#), is among the top three for men and women in South Africa according to the National Cancer Register (2019). Previously colorectal cancer was associated with older adults, however younger adults are being diagnosed more frequently. CANSAS promotes regular cancer screening, especially if there is a family history of colorectal cancer, or if any warning signs present to investigate this by making an appointment with a medical health practitioner and take steps to lower the personal cancer risk.



#CANSAColorectalCancer #ColorectalCancerAwareness #ActiveBalancedLifestyle

Colorectal cancer in its early stages shows no symptoms and in younger people may be misdiagnosed. For this reason, it's often diagnosed late when at a more advanced stage or it has spread to other parts of the body. It's therefore important to know what is normal for one's body, know the warning signs and to be aware of family history. Equally important is to take advantage of screening for colorectal cancer preventatively, before symptoms are experienced, and not to wait until experiencing discomfort.

Carima Adams, cancer survivor, explains that her symptoms were not diagnosed correctly, "I was diagnosed at 28, late stage 3. I experienced symptoms, but the doctors kept misdiagnosing me. Eventually I went straight to a specialist who picked it up."

Lorraine Govender, CANSAS's national manager: health promotion shares highlights of CANSAS's colorectal campaign: "CANSAS in partnership with [The South African Colorectal Society \(SACRS\)](#) continues to educate providing the facts in a fun, interactive way. In partnership with Medtronic, CANSAS released a [colorectal awareness video](#) featuring 'Sizwe and Crystal' who discover how their lifestyle choices have affected their colorectal health, and what symptoms they should not ignore. [The 'Colin the Colon' Tunnel](#), was also created to teach about colorectal cancer in a visual and tactile manner. The public can walk through a 2x3m inflatable tunnel representing the colorectal tract and get educated about colorectal cancer.

Colin (who recently made an appearance at [SAPHEX exhibition](#) in March 2022, where CANSA and [LocumBase](#) provided free cancer screening to medical professionals) may be viewed inside and out at various CANSA events and may even be requested to be on display at [employee wellness events](#) by the public.”

Dr Vuyo Soldati, colorectal fellow at the Groote Schuur Hospital adds, “Colorectal cancer can be cured with surgery if detected early enough. Patients with a change in bowel habit showing looser stools, rectal bleeding or iron deficiency anaemia, should be investigated with a colonoscopy.”

CANSA encourages early detection and screening by means of a colonoscopy, starting at age 50 and repeated every 10 years depending on the individual's risk factors. A colonoscopy may also be requested if abnormal symptoms are experienced and if there is a family history of colorectal cancer a colonoscopy may be requested at a younger age. [CANSA](#) provides Faecal Occult at home stool tests (R100), which can be done at home. If the test is positive (visible red line on test strip) for the presence of blood in the stool, CANSA provides a referral letter to request a colonoscopy.

The latest report on colorectal cancer by the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR), found that eating fiber-rich foods, exercising regularly and maintaining a healthy weight can lower your risk. Eating high amounts of red and processed meat, drinking excess alcohol and carrying extra body fat were all linked to a higher risk.

A side effect of colorectal cancer may include having a colostomy. Many colorectal cancer patients have a portion of their bowel and / or colon removed and end up with a permanent stoma. A stoma is an opening on the abdomen that can be connected to the digestive or urinary system to allow waste to be diverted from the body. It can take a while for a patient to adapt to living with a stoma, so it's important to seek support from CANSA.

The **CANSA Tele Stoma Support Service** offers online consultations for stoma patients and their families to assist with challenges or stoma queries including professional pre- and post-operative counselling and support groups at [Stoma Clinics](#) as well as stoma bags and linen savers that can be purchased at reduced prices at most local [CANSA Care Centres](#).

CANSA also continues to advocate with policy makers for a National Colorectal Cancer Policy to promote the rights of colorectal cancer patients, guide population based screening and public health services related to risk reduction, treatment, care, support and control of colorectal cancer.

*** <https://www.wcrf-uk.org/uk/health-advice-and-support/resources-cancer-prevention/10-ways-protect-yourself-against-cancer>

<https://www.aicr.org/research/the-continuous-update-project/colorectal-cancer/>

*** [CANSA Colorectal Cancer Fact Sheet](#)

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CANSA



CANSA's purpose is to lead the fight against cancer in South Africa and be the preferred non-profit organisation that enables research, educates, and provides support to all affected by cancer.

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