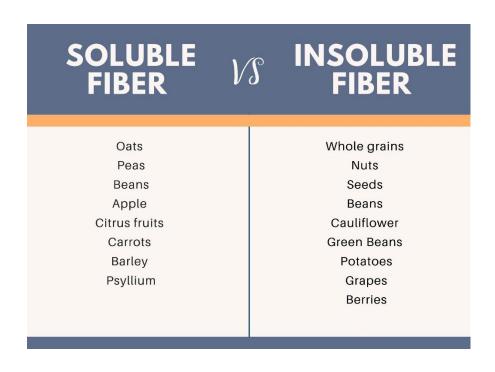# Let's Talk About Colon Health…

Emma Smith, MS, RD, LD

March is nationally recognized as Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. Colon health is not always the first thing people want to talk about, but considering that the colon is responsible for the digestion of foods and absorption of nutrients, keeping it healthy should be a top priority. Everything we eat passes through our colon so it makes sense that making better food choices is in your colon's best interest. According to the Colon Cancer Foundation, positive lifestyle changes can reduce the risk of developing colorectal cancer by 50-75% (1). So, what are these lifestyle changes and how do you implement them?

Focus on Fiber

Fiber is a key player in keeping our colon healthy, and many people don't get enough of it (25g for women, 38g for men). There are two types of fiber, soluble and insoluble, and both should be regularly featured in your diet (2). Soluble fiber attracts and dissolves in water, slowing down digestion and helping to keep you to feel full longer. Insoluble fiber does not dissolve in water and is responsible for adding bulk to our stool and keeping bowel movements regular (3).

SOLUBLE FIBER	INSOLUBLE FIBER
Oats	Whole grains
Peas	Nuts
Beans	Seeds
Apple	Beans
Citrus fruits	Cauliflower
Carrots	Green Beans
Barley	Potatoes
Psyllium	Grapes
	Berries

Ramp up your fiber intake by…

- Switching to whole grain products
- Leaving the peel on your apples, potatoes, cucumbers, etc. (there is a LOT of fiber in the peel)
- Incorporating beans in more meals
- Snacking on nuts and seeds
- Adding leafy greens and/or seeds to your smoothies

Cut Back on Red Meat

Consumption of red meats and processed meats is strongly associated with an increased risk of colorectal cancer. Consider limiting consumption of red meat to three 4-6oz servings per week (4). Instead of red and processed meats, try out other protein sources such as fish, poultry, beans, or nuts.

Meat free meal ideas

- Vegetable Lasagna
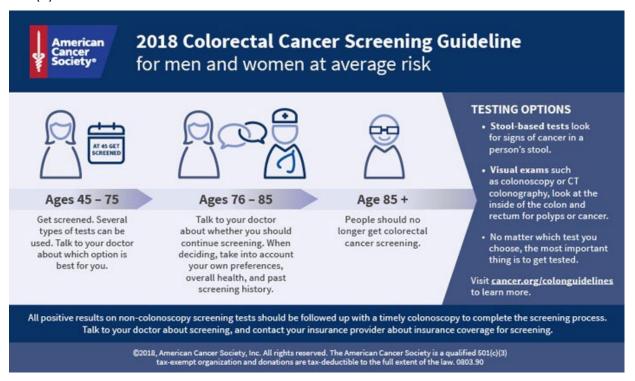- Veggie Fried Rice
- Minestrone Soup

Limit Alcohol

According to the National Cancer Institute, moderate to heavy alcohol consumption may increase the risk of colorectal cancer by 1.2 to 1.5 times (5). Moderate alcohol consumption is considered up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men.

Stay on Top of Screenings

The American Cancer Society recommends that individuals without an increased risk of colorectal cancer should begin regular screening at the age of 45. Those with an increased risk should start screening earlier than 45 years old. You may be at an increased risk if you have a

personal or family history of colorectal cancer or colon polyps, you have a history of Inflammatory Bowel Disease, or have received radiation treatment to the abdominal or pelvic area. A family history of hereditary colorectal cancer syndrome will also put you at an increased risk (6).

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