

# In the Spirit of Health

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS  
**MDAnderson**  
~~Cancer~~ Center  
Making Cancer History®

MARCH 2023 | "I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you." - 3 John 1:2

## Colorectal cancer taught me to listen to my body

Abigail Pardo started finding blood in her stool in the fall of 2013 when she was 19, but at the time, it didn't seem that strange. Constipation runs in her family, and she'd always been easily constipated. Water was her solution to everything, so she figured she just needed to drink more of it.

A few months later, she started feeling out of breath after even the slightest activity, and whenever she lifted something heavy, she'd throw up right afterwards. Her family told her she looked pale, and she'd lost a lot of weight. Finally, she went to the doctor. Tests showed she was losing blood from her colon and revealed a tumor the size of a golf ball. She was diagnosed with stage III colorectal cancer.

Doctors did micro-surgery through her belly button to remove it. She finished follow-up chemotherapy treatment in June 2014 and has been in remission ever since.

"Now, cancer just feels like a strange dream. That six-month period was a really weird time in my life, but I believe it made me stronger. And today, I feel like this is the best I've ever been," says Abigail. She has this message to help others avoid colorectal cancer.

"Your body knows when something's not right, and it will give you signs, so pay attention. Take care of yourself, because you're worth it. There's never going to be another you."



Abigail Pardo with her husband

**"Your body knows when something's not right, and it will give you signs, so pay attention."** - Abigail Pardo, *Survivor*

**Beginning at age 45, most men and women should get a colonoscopy every 10 years to screen for colorectal cancer.**

Alternatives to colonoscopy include:

- Virtual colonoscopy every five years
- Stool-based tests every year or every three years, depending on the test

**Individuals of any age should see their doctor if they have any of the following symptoms:**

- Rectal bleeding or blood in the stool or toilet after bowel movement
- Prolonged diarrhea or constipation
- Change in the size or shape of your stool
- Abdominal pain or cramping in your lower stomach
- Urge to have a bowel movement when there is no need

If you have questions about In the Spirit of Health, e-mail  
**Community@MDAnderson.org** or call **713-792-3363**.

# Tips to reduce your colorectal cancer risk

## Get screened.

Screening exams for colorectal cancer can find the disease early, when it's most treatable.

## Maintain a healthy weight.

Excess body fat is linked to an increased risk of colorectal cancer.

## Know your family medical history.

Tell your doctor if someone in your family has had cancer. Knowing your family history can make a difference in preventing cancer.

## Exercise regularly.

Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise each week.

## Eat a plant-based diet.

Make 2/3 of your plate vegetables, whole grains and fruit. The other 1/3 should be lean animal protein or plant-based protein.

## Limit red meat.

The more you eat, the more you increase your risk.

## Avoid processed meat.

This includes bacon, deli meats and hot dogs.

## Limit alcohol.

For cancer prevention, it's best not to drink alcohol.

If you smoke or use any kind of tobacco, **get help** to stop right away.

## Faith without works is dead - James 2:14

**Adding high fiber foods to your diet can help reduce your risk for colorectal and other cancer.**



## Lentil and veggie enchilada casserole

Try this healthy recipe to add more fiber to your diet. Lentil and veggie enchilada casserole—a comfort meal that's healthy.



► Open your camera or QR code reader to scan the QR code to view the recipe

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