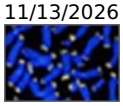
Chromosomes that are too long or too short may increase colon cancer risk.

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A study of 773 young colon cancer patients and 1660 healthy individuals showed that those people whose chromosomes were unusually long or short were more likely to develop colon cancer. Specifically, the researchers looked at the very tips of the chromosomes, areas called telomeres. Telomeres act to protect the ends chromosomes and prevent chromsomes from sticking to each other.

The results suggest that there may be at least two different ways that telomeres are involved in colon cancer development. The impact of the results on the treatment or survival of colon cancer patients is not known.

Research was presented at the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) conference on Colorectal Cancer: Biology to Therapy, which took place in Philadelphia from October 27-30, 2010.

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