

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT COLORECTAL CANCER SCREENING

In the Clinic
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Who should be screened for colorectal cancer?

- All adults should undergo screening beginning at age 50 years.
- Persons with family members who have colorectal cancer or other risk factors may start screening before age 50 years.
- Remember that when your doctor suggests a screening test, it does not mean he or she thinks you have cancer.

How does screening prevent cancer?

- Screening can find abnormal growths (polyps) so they can be removed before they turn into cancer.
- If cancer has developed, screening can detect it early, when it is highly curable.
- If colorectal cancer is found early, surgery can cure it, but cancer found later may not be curable.
- Colorectal cancer often does not cause symptoms until it has become advanced and spread.

What tests are used for screening?

- *High-sensitivity fecal occult blood test* examines stool under a microscope to see if it contains any blood, which can be a sign of polyps or cancer.
- *Flexible sigmoidoscopy* uses a thin, flexible, lighted tube to view inside the rectum and sigmoid colon (the lower part of the colon) for polyps or signs of cancer.
- *Colonoscopy* is similar to flexible sigmoidoscopy, except the doctor uses a longer, thin, flexible, lighted tube to view inside the entire colon.
- Most polyps and some cancer found during sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy can be removed during the test.



- Your doctor can help you decide which screening test is best for you.

If screening works, why do some people avoid it?

- About 1 in 3 adults aged 50 to 75 years have not been tested for colorectal cancer as recommended.
- Some people do not know they should be tested or are unaware of the benefits of regular screening.
- Some are worried that the test will be uncomfortable or embarrassing.
- Some are uncertain whether their insurance will cover the procedure.
- If you are worried, you can talk with your doctor about these and any other concerns.

For More Information

www.healthfinder.gov/HealthTopics/Category/doctor-visits/screening-tests/get-tested-for-colorectal-cancer#take-action_1
www.healthfinder.gov/espanol/prevention/viewtopic.aspx?topicId=15
What to know and how to get tested for colorectal cancer from U.S. Health and Human Services in English and Spanish.

www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/basic_info/screening
www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/basic_info/screening/questions.htm
Facts on colorectal cancer screening and questions to ask your doctor from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

www.consumerreports.org/cro/2012/03/guide-to-colon-cancer-prevention/index.htm
Guide to Colon Cancer Prevention from *Consumer Reports*.

www.cancer.org/cancer/colonandrectumcancer/moreinformation/colonandrectumcancerearlydetection/index
Information on tests to detect colorectal cancer and polyps from the American Cancer Society.

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