

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.
- People with family members who have colorectal cancer or other risk factors may start screening before age 50 years.
- Asymptomatic persons with average risk for colorectal cancer should stop screening after age 75 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 doesn't cause symptoms until it has become advanced and has spread.

What Tests Are Used for Screening?

- High-sensitivity guaiac-based fecal occult blood tests or fecal immunochemical tests detect hidden blood in the stool, which can be a sign of polyps or cancer.
- Flexible sigmoidoscopy uses a thin, flexible, lighted tube to view the inside of the rectum and the 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 the inside of 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 about 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



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Information in English and Spanish from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on what to know and how to get tested for colorectal cancer.

www.healthfinder.gov/HealthTopics/Category/doctor-visits/screening-tests/get-tested-for-colorectal-cancer#take-action_1
<https://health.gov/espanol/myhealthfinder/visitas-doctor/pruebas-deteccion/hazte-pruebas-deteccion-temprana-cancer-colorrectal>

Facts on colorectal cancer screening and questions to ask your doctor from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/basic_info/screening
www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/basic_info/screening/questions.htm

Consumer Reports guide to colon cancer prevention.

www.consumerreports.org/cro/2012/03/guide-to-colon-cancer-prevention/index.htm

Information on tests to detect colorectal cancer and polyps from the American Cancer Society.

www.cancer.org/cancer/latest-news/understanding-tests-that-screen-for-colon-cancer.html