

# Colorectal Cancer Screening: Which test is right for you?



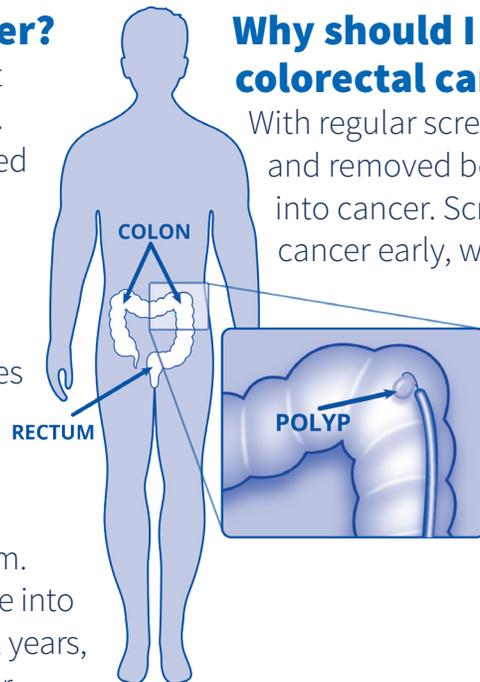
- » **COLORECTAL CANCER IS THE SECOND-LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH FROM CANCER IN THE U.S. FOR MEN AND WOMEN COMBINED.** The best way to prevent death from colorectal cancer is to stay current with screening.
- » **THERE ARE MANY SCREENING TESTS FOR COLORECTAL CANCER.** You and your health care provider have a decision to make about which screening test is right for you. The test you choose will depend on your preference and which tests are available to you. No matter which test you use, the most important thing is to get tested.
- » **THE AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY RECOMMENDS** that adults ages 45 and older with an average risk of colorectal cancer get screened regularly with a stool test or a visual test. Part of screening is having a follow-up colonoscopy for positive results on any screening test (besides colonoscopy).

*Who is this decision aid for?*  
*This decision aid is for adults who:*  
.....  
**Are 45 years of age or older**  
.....  
**Are at average risk for colorectal cancer**

## What is colorectal cancer?

Colorectal cancer is a cancer that starts in the colon or the rectum. These cancers can also be named colon cancer or rectal cancer, depending on where they start. Colon cancer and rectal cancer are often grouped together because they have many features in common.

Most colorectal cancers begin as a growth called a polyp on the inner lining of the colon or rectum. Some types of polyps can change into cancer over the course of several years, but not all polyps become cancer.



## Why should I get screened for colorectal cancer?

With regular screening, most polyps can be found and removed before they have the chance to turn into cancer. Screening can also find colorectal cancer early, when it is smaller and easier to treat.

*Colorectal cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer death in the U.S. when men and women are combined, yet it can be prevented or detected at an early stage.*

## How can I lower my risk of getting colorectal cancer?

There are things you can do to help lower your risk, such as staying at a healthy weight, being physically active, not smoking, limiting alcohol, and eating a diet high in vegetables and fruits.



## What screening tests are available?

Several screening options may be available to you.\* All of the screening tests below are effective at finding colorectal cancer. These tests fall into two categories. Stool tests are tests you can do at home by taking a stool sample and mailing it to a

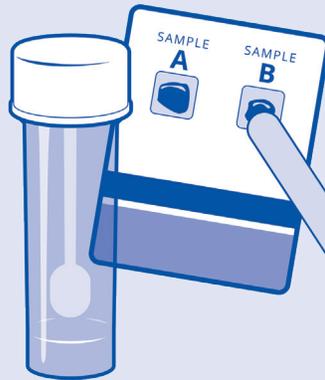
lab. Visual tests are tests that a doctor does to look inside your colon. Most health insurance plans, including Medicare, cover most of these screening tests. Talk with your provider about which screening tests might be right for you.

### STOOL TESTS

#### Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT)

HOW OFTEN: **Once a year**

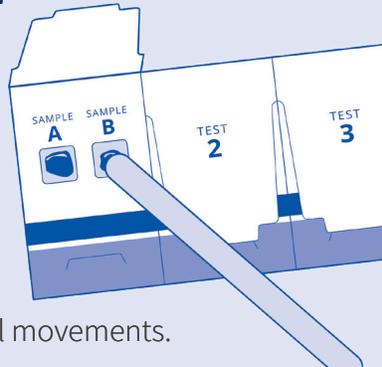
- » You take a stool sample at home using a kit your provider gives you.
- » It checks for blood in samples from 1 bowel movement.
- » You mail your sample to a lab.



#### High-sensitivity Guaiac-based Fecal Occult Blood Test (HSgFOBT)

HOW OFTEN: **Once a year**

- » You take stool samples at home using a kit your provider gives you.
- » You mail your samples to a lab.
- » It checks for blood in samples from 3 bowel movements.



#### Multi-target Stool DNA (MT-sDNA)

HOW OFTEN: **Every 3 years**

- » You collect a bowel movement and stool sample at home using a kit your provider has shipped to you.
- » It checks stool for blood and abnormal DNA from polyps or cancer.
- » You mail a whole bowel movement and stool sample to a lab.

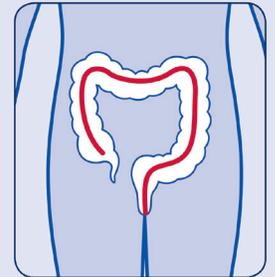


### VISUAL TESTS

#### Colonoscopy

HOW OFTEN: **Every 10 years**

- » Your provider uses a tube with a tiny camera to look for and remove polyps and cancer in your colon and rectum.
- » You take a prep (tablets and something to drink) before the test to empty the colon. It causes diarrhea (watery stool).
- » You will be sedated and need a day off work. You will need someone to drive you.



#### CT Colonography (CTC)

HOW OFTEN: **Every 5 years**

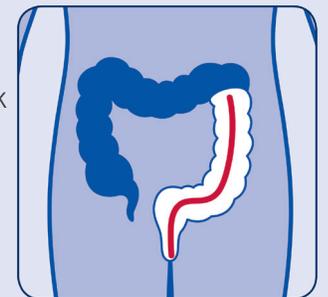
- » The test is also called virtual colonoscopy.
- » Your provider uses an x-ray machine to look for polyps and cancer in your colon and rectum.
- » You take a prep (tablets and something to drink) before the test to empty the colon. It causes diarrhea (watery stool).



#### Flexible Sigmoidoscopy (FS)

HOW OFTEN: **Every 5 years**

- » Your provider uses a tube with a tiny camera to look for polyps and cancer in the lower part of your colon and rectum.
- » You give yourself 1 or 2 pre-filled enemas before the test to empty and clean the colon.
- » This test is not available in most places.



\*Not all tests may be available. Talk with your health care provider about which tests are available to you.

## Talking with your health care provider

**Please bring this page to your next primary care appointment.** Your answers will help you and your provider discuss which screening test is right for you.

*Preventing colon cancer or finding it early doesn't have to be expensive. There are simple, affordable tests available. Get screened! Call your doctor today.*

### WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU?

Think about what is important to you in choosing a screening test. Answer the questions below to help you and your provider decide which test is right for you.

How concerned are you about:	NOT CONCERNED			VERY CONCERNED	
Having to collect samples of your stool?	<input type="radio"/>				
Completing screening every year?	<input type="radio"/>				
Completing a prep to empty the colon?	<input type="radio"/>				
Having an invasive procedure?	<input type="radio"/>				
Taking time off to complete screening?	<input type="radio"/>				
Being sedated and needing someone to drive you home after the screening?	<input type="radio"/>				

## Myths about colorectal cancer screening

**MYTH:** Screening is too expensive.

**FACT:** **Most screening tests are covered by insurance, including Medicare. There are also low-cost screening options.**

**MYTH:** Nobody in my family has a history of colorectal cancer, so I am not at risk.

**FACT:** **Most colorectal cancers are found in people without a family history of colorectal cancer. Those with a family history are at higher risk.**

**MYTH:** If my stool looks normal, I should be fine.

**FACT:** **You can have colorectal cancer or polyps even if your stool looks normal.**

**MYTH:** Colorectal cancer is not that common.

**FACT:** **Colorectal cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the U.S. Screening is the best way to prevent death from colorectal cancer.**

**MYTH:** Having a colonoscopy is the only way to get screened.

**FACT:** **There are several different screening tests available. Some are simple and can be done at home.**

## Questions for your health care provider

- » Why do I need to get screened now?
- » What tests do you recommend for me?
- » How do I prepare for the test?
- » Will the test be painful or uncomfortable?
- » Is there any risk involved in the test?
- » What happens if the screening test comes back positive?
- » When should I stop screening?
- » How and when will I get my results?