

Colorectal cancer screening

Colorectal cancer (also called colon cancer) typically forms from polyps that can grow in the colon or rectum. Colorectal cancer screening can help find these polyps, so they can be removed before they become cancerous.

Screening for colon polyps works best when it is done regularly to detect issues early. Still, many people in the U.S. who should be screened are not getting screened.



Do you need to be screened for colon cancer?

According to the CDC, regular colorectal cancer screening beginning at age 50 can help prevent colorectal cancer by finding polyps early.

The U.S. Preventative Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommends:

- People age 50-75 should be screened regularly for colorectal cancer.
- People age 76 and older should ask their doctor if, and when, they should be screened.

You may need to begin testing earlier than 50, or be screened more often, if you have certain risk factors such as:

- A history of colorectal polyps
- A family member who has had colorectal cancer
- Certain chronic bowel diseases
- Genetic syndromes that can predispose a person to colorectal cancer

Talk to your doctor about your risk factors, and when you should begin getting screened for colon cancer.

Types of colorectal cancer screening tests

There are several types of colorectal cancer screening tests. The one best for you depends upon your individual risk and preferences. Screening options include:

Stool tests

Stool tests detect blood or altered DNA in the stool. Stool tests need to be performed more frequently than the other types of screening exams.

CT colonoscopy

CT colonoscopy is an imaging exam that uses CT images to render the colon on a computer screen. Doctors can review these images for areas of concern.

Flexible sigmoidoscopy

Flexible sigmoidoscopy uses a short, thin tube to check for polyps in the rectum and lower portion of the colon.

Colonoscopy

A colonoscopy exam uses a longer tube to check for polyps in the rectum and the entire colon. During this test, most polyps that are found can be removed or biopsied. Typically, if any other test is done with an abnormal result, a colonoscopy is performed.

How do you know which screening test is best for you? Talk to your doctor. He or she will review your health situation, your preferences, and which tests are available in your area and will make a recommendation.

How can you lower your risk of colorectal cancer?

In addition to regular screening, certain lifestyle changes can help minimize your risks of colorectal cancer. For example:

- Exercise regularly
- Eat a healthy diet rich in fiber
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Limit alcohol
- Don't use tobacco

The most effective way of preventing colorectal cancer is by getting screened. Make sure to follow your doctor's recommendations for screening.

REFERENCES:

https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/basic_info/screening/index.htm

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