

Have You Been Screened for Colorectal Cancer?

Things to know:

- Colorectal cancer screening begins at age 50 but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends people at a higher risk of developing colorectal cancer to start testing at a younger age.
- "Colorectal" refers to the colon and rectum, which together make up the large intestine (bowel).
- Colorectal cancer often starts with a polyp that grows in the colon or rectum that shouldn't be there.
- Symptoms such as a change in stool, rectal bleeding, stomach pain and unplanned weight loss can all signal colorectal cancer.
- Colorectal cancer often starts with **no symptoms** at all.
- Colorectal cancer is the second leading cancer killer in the United States, but it doesn't have to be.
- Studies show that early screening can help find cancer at an early stage and may decrease the number of deaths from the disease.
- Ask your doctor if and when you should get tested.

Find it Early: Screening Tests for Colorectal Cancer

Blood Test (FOBT):

- This test you do at home using a kit you get from your doctor.
- You put stool samples on test cards and return the cards to your doctor or a lab.
- This test looks for occult (hidden) blood in your stool.
- **How often?** Once a year or as recommended by your doctor.

Sigmoidoscopy:

- This test uses a flexible tube and camera to see the lower part of your colon and rectum to check for any problems, polyps or early signs of cancer.
- **How often?** Every 5 years.

Colonoscopy:

- This test is like a sigmoidoscopy, except the doctor can see the entire colon and find and remove most polyps and some cancers.
- Colonoscopy also is used as a follow-up test if something unusual is found during one of the other screening tests.
- **How often?** Every 10 years or as recommended by doctor.



Colonoscopy: What to Expect

- Before the exam you will drink a liquid to clean out your bowel.
 - ❖ You will have many bowel movements.
 - ❖ Most people say that this prep is the worst part.
- You may experience skin irritation:
 - ❖ Apply ointment to the skin around the anus before drinking the liquid.
 - ❖ Wipe the skin after each bowel movement with wet wipes instead of toilet paper.

During the Test:

- You are given medication that will make you feel relaxed and somewhat drowsy.
- A small amount of air is used to expand your colon so the doctor can see it.
- You may feel mild cramping which can be reduced by taking slow, deep breaths.
- The doctor looks at your bowel with a colonoscope.
- The procedure lasts from 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Do you feel this way?

- “I’m afraid of getting a colonoscopy.”
- “I’m modest and don’t like talking about private matters.”
- “My life is so busy right now, and I don’t know if I have time to get screened.”
- “I’ve got other health problems to worry about.”
- “I’m afraid of the results.”

If any of the above statements are true for you, take an active role in your health care and talk to your doctor about your concerns.

- Your doctor can work with you to figure out what type of screening is best and when to have it.
- Make your health a priority and find it early! Stop this cancer before it starts.