



Colorectal Cancer

Get Screened

"It's too personal to talk about." "I don't understand how the test works." "I'll get tested if I start feeling bad." "Look, I feel fine." "I'm scared they'll find something." "I'm not old enough to get colorectal cancer."

These are some of the excuses people use to avoid getting tested for colorectal cancer. If you're 50 or older, or if you experience symptoms at any age, you need to be screened. You have the power to stop colorectal cancer before it starts by getting a colonoscopy and removing any polyps. Plus, colorectal cancer is more easily treated and often curable when detected early.

Colorectal cancer starts with a growth that is not cancer yet. Screening can help your doctor tell if there is a problem and some tests can find a growth (otherwise known as polyps) before it becomes cancer.

You owe it to yourself and the people who love you to take care of yourself. Make these screening tests a part of your healthy lifestyle. Talk to your doctor about getting tested for colorectal cancer.

Beginning at age 50 (or earlier if you have a family history or are experiencing symptoms):

- Have a colonoscopy or double contrast barium enema every 5 to 10 years. Have all non-cancerous polyps removed.
- Have a digital rectal exam every 5 to 10 years at the time of each screening colonoscopy, or barium enema.
- Have a yearly fecal occult blood test (FOBT).
- If you have a personal or family history of cancer, colorectal polyps, inflammatory bowel disease, breast, uterine, endometrial cancer, or some other cancers of the GI tract or female reproductive organs, talk to your doctor about early screening. More frequent testing may be appropriate.
- No matter how young or old you are, see a doctor for a colonoscopy immediately if you have any symptoms.
- If you have a family history of some cancers or of any colorectal cancer or polyps, you need to get a colonoscopy at least 10 years prior to your first family member's diagnosis.

Talking with your Healthcare Provider about Colorectal Cancer

Screening tests for colorectal cancer can save 30,000 lives each year. These tests not only detect colorectal cancer early, but also can prevent colorectal cancer by the removal of non-cancerous polyps before they become cancer. When you turn



50 years old, or if you are younger and have a personal or family history of cancer, colorectal polyps, inflammatory bowel disease, or ovarian, endometrial, or breast cancer, or of some other cancers of the GI tract or female reproductive system, or if you are experiencing symptoms, you need to talk to your healthcare provider about colorectal cancer screening tests. Here are some questions to help you begin this important conversation:

- I am not 50, but I am having symptoms of colorectal cancer. How soon can I schedule a colonoscopy?
- I just turned 50 years old. How soon can I be scheduled for a screening?
- I don't have any family history of cancer or colorectal polyps. When should I be screened?
- My medical history and/or my family medical history puts me at an increased risk for colorectal cancer. How much earlier should I be screened? How much more often should I be screened?
- I understand that there are a number of screening tests available. Would you tell me about each of these tests, and their pros and cons?
- I don't know which screening test is appropriate for me now. Which test do you recommend and why?
- Will you perform the test? If not, who will?
- Will I be awake or asleep during the test?
- Will the test hurt?
- How will I learn the results of the test?
- What kind of follow-up care will I need if the test shows a problem?
- If the tests show nothing's wrong, when should I be tested again?
- What is the cost of these tests? Will my insurance cover the cost?

Colorectal cancer is preventable and easy to treat when detected early. Talk with your healthcare provider about what kind of screening test is right for you.

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