

Colon Cancer Prevention

The following options are acceptable choices for colorectal cancer screening in average-risk adults. Since each of the following tests have inherent characteristics related to accuracy, prevention potential, costs, and risks, individuals should have an opportunity to make an informed decision when choosing one of the following options:

Tests that find polyps and cancer	
Test	Interval
Flexible sigmoidoscopy*	Every 5 years
Colonoscopy	Every 10 years
CT colonography (virtual colonoscopy)*	Every 5 years
Tests that mainly find cancer	
Guaiac-based fecal occult blood test (FOBT)*, **	Annually
Fecal immunochemical test (FIT)*, **	Annually
Stool DNA test (sDNA)*	Every 3 years

* If the test is positive, a colonoscopy should be done.

** Highly sensitive versions of these tests should be used with the take-home multiple sample method. An FOBT or FIT done during a digital rectal exam in the doctor's office is not adequate for screening.

Preventing Colorectal Cancer

Eat a healthy diet.

- Eat 2 1/2 cups of fruits and vegetables a day.
- Limit consumption of red and processed meats.
- Choose whole grains instead of refined-grain products.
- Limit alcohol intake to no more than 2 drinks/day for men and 1 drink/day for women.

Get physically active and maintain a healthy weight.

- Adults should get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity each week (or a combination of these), preferably spread throughout the week.
- Balance caloric intake with physical activity.

Avoid smoking and use of other tobacco products.

Modifying these behaviors will also reduce the risk of other cancers, cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, and diabetes.

Why get tested?

- Colon cancer is the third most commonly diagnosed form of cancer in the United States in both men and women.
- Screening can result in the detection and removal of colorectal polyps before they become cancerous. Screening reduces mortality both by decreasing incidence and by detecting a higher proportion of cancers at early, more treatable stages.
- When colorectal cancers are detected at an early, localized stage, the 5-year survival rate is 90 percent; however, only 40 percent are diagnosed at this stage, mostly due to low rates of screening.

