







# Get tested for **Colorectal cancer**

Doctors know how to prevent colon or rectal cancer – and you can, too.  
*Take a look inside.*





If you're 45 or older, you should start getting screened for colorectal cancer. Several types of tests can be used.



No matter which test you choose, the most important thing is to get tested.



## Colorectal cancer: Should you be concerned?

If you're 45 or older, the answer is yes.

If you're 45 or older, you need to think about colorectal cancer. Most colon or rectal cancers occur in men and women around this age.

## But no one in your family has had colorectal cancer?

Most people who get colorectal cancer have no family history of the disease. And you can have colorectal cancer and not even know it. If you have a parent, brother, sister, or child who has had colon or rectal cancer, then testing is even more important for you. In fact, you may need to start testing before you're 45.

## Get tested.

You have the power to help stop colorectal cancer before it starts. Colorectal cancer begins with a growth (called a polyp) that's not yet cancer. Testing can help your health care provider tell whether there's a problem.

When polyps are found and removed, it can keep some people from getting colorectal cancer.

# Ask for the test.

If your health care provider doesn't mention getting tested for colorectal cancer, don't be afraid to ask about it. There's more than one way to get tested, so you and your provider should choose the test that's best for you.



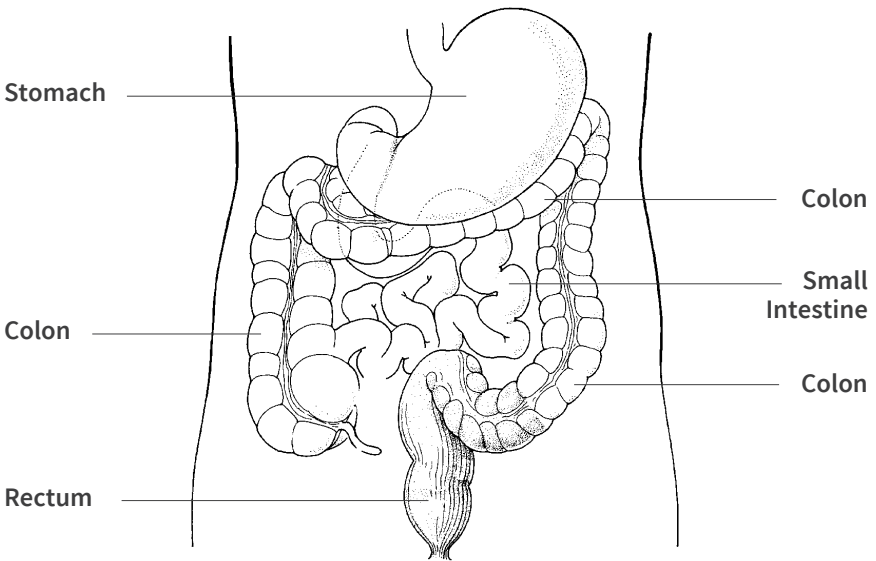
Talk to your health care provider about which tests might be good options for you, and to your insurance provider about your coverage.

# What is colorectal cancer?

Cancer of the colon or rectum is called colorectal cancer.

# What do the colon and rectum do?

The colon and rectum help the body digest food. They hold waste until it passes out of the body.



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The colon is also called the large intestine.

# What are the stool (poop) sample tests?

## **Fecal immunochemical test (FIT)**

Your health care provider will give you a test kit to take home. You will put a small amount of your poop on a card. The kit will explain how to do this. You may have to do this on 2 or 3 cards, depending on the kind of test kit you're given. The cards are returned to your provider's office or a lab to be tested. Testing will tell your provider if there is blood in your poop. If blood is found, a colonoscopy will need to be done to look for the cause of the blood. This test can help find some colorectal cancers, but it can also miss some.

## **Guaiaac-based fecal occult blood test (gFOBT)**

Your health care provider will give you a test kit to take home. You will need to smear a small amount of your poop on a card. The cards are returned to your provider's office or a lab to be tested. Testing will tell your provider if there is blood in your poop. If blood is present, a colonoscopy will need to be done to look for the cause of the blood. This test can help find some cancers in the colon or rectum, but it can also miss some.

## **Multi-targeted stool DNA test (MT-sDNA)**

This test checks your poop for cancer cells. Your health care provider will give you a test kit to take home. You will collect a sample of your poop and return it to a lab to be tested. This test will find some colorectal cancers, but it can also miss some. If the test finds cells that may be cancer, a colonoscopy will need to be done.

# What tests look at the colon and rectum?

## Colonoscopy

A narrow, lighted tube is used to look at the inside of the rectum and the entire colon. The doctor will be looking for cancer or polyps that could turn into cancer. If they see any polyps or growths, they can remove it or take a piece to test it for cancer. Patients are usually given drugs to make them sleep during a colonoscopy.

## CT colonography

With this test, air is pumped into your colon. Then a special type of x-ray called a CT scan is done. The test can be done quickly and with no sedation. If a polyp or growth is found, a colonoscopy must be done to remove it or take a piece to test for cancer.

## Flexible sigmoidoscopy

A narrow, lighted tube is used to look inside your rectum and lower part of the colon. The doctor will be looking for cancer or polyps that could turn into cancer. If they see something, they can take a piece of it and test it for cancer. This test allows the doctor to look at only the lower part of the colon. If any growths or polyps are found, a colonoscopy will need to be done.

# How do I prepare for these tests?

No advance preparation is needed for the stool tests. You'll have to follow the instructions of the kit and will need to return the kits to either your provider or a lab for testing.

For the colonoscopy, CT colonography, and sigmoidoscopy, your colon will need to be cleaned out as much as possible. You may need to have only clear liquids and no food for some time before the test. You'll take a strong laxative the day before the test and may need to give yourself an enema the morning of the test.

# Which tests are best for me?

There are some differences between these tests to consider, but the most important thing is to get screened, no matter which test you choose. Talk to your health care provider about which tests might be good options for you, and to your insurance provider about your coverage.

## **The American Cancer Society recommends that starting at age 45 you have one of these tests:**

### ***Stool-based tests***

Yearly fecal immunochemical test (FIT),\* or

Yearly guaiac-based fecal occult blood test (gFOBT),\* or

Multi-targeted stool DNA test (MT-sDNA)\* every 3 years

### ***Visual exams of the colon and rectum***

Colonoscopy every 10 years, or

CT colonography (virtual colonoscopy)\* every 5 years, or

Flexible sigmoidoscopy\* every 5 years

*\*If a person chooses to be screened with a test other than colonoscopy, any abnormal test result should be followed up with colonoscopy.*

If you're in good health, you should continue regular screening through **age 75**.



For people **ages 76 through 85**, talk with your health care provider about whether continuing to get screened is right for you. When deciding, take into account your own preferences, overall health, and past screening history.

People **over 85** should no longer get colorectal cancer screening.

## How can I find out more about colorectal cancer?

Asking about colorectal cancer testing isn't always easy. The American Cancer Society can help. Call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We can tell you more about the tests, help you talk to your health care provider, or listen to your concerns.

# Notes





There are many different tests that can be used to check for colorectal cancer in people who don't have symptoms. Learn more about them here, then talk to a health care provider about the best colorectal cancer screening plan for you.

For cancer information, day-to-day help, and emotional support, call your American Cancer Society at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.



[cancer.org](https://cancer.org) | 1.800.227.2345

