



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 50 or older, you need to get tested for colorectal cancer.

It's one cancer that can actually be prevented!



Colorectal cancer: Should you be concerned?

If you're 50 or older, the answer is yes.

If you're 50 or older, you need to think about colorectal cancer. Most colon or rectal cancers occur in men and women who are 50 or older.

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 50.

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, and some tests can find polyps before they become cancer. Most people who have polyps removed never get colorectal cancer. If colorectal cancer is found, you have a good chance of beating it with treatment if it's found early (when it's small and has not spread). And testing can help find it early.

We believe that **preventing** colorectal cancer (and not just finding it early) should be a major reason for getting tested. When polyps are found and removed, it can keep some people from getting colorectal cancer. Tests that have the best chance of finding both polyps and cancer should be your first choice if these tests are available and you're willing to have them.

Ask for the test.

As you get older, you have more health concerns. Your health care provider has a lot to talk to you about. If your 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.

You owe it to yourself and the people who love you to take care of yourself.



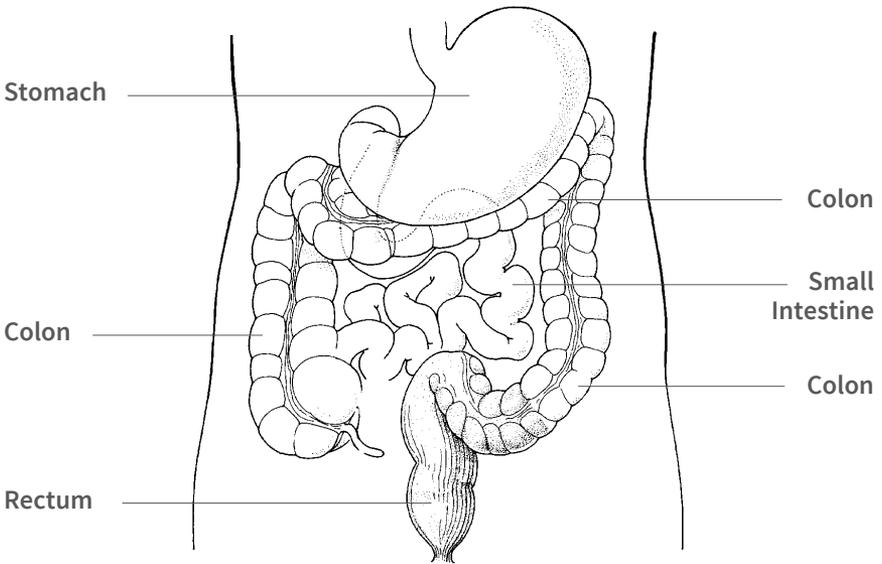
Talk to your health care provider about getting tested for colorectal cancer.

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.



The colon is also called the large intestine.

What are the tests for finding polyps and colorectal 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.

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.

Double-contrast barium enema

After a special enema is given, x-rays are taken of your rectum and colon. The barium in the enema coats the inside of the rectum and colon. The x-rays can then show any growths or polyps. If a change is seen, a colonoscopy will need to be done so the doctor can remove it or take a piece to test for cancer.

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.

Remember: These tests offer the best chance of finding both polyps and cancer, and they're preferred if they're available and you're willing to have them.

What are the tests for finding colorectal cancer?

Guaiac-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. You'll do this for 3 bowel movements. 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.

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.

Stool DNA test (sDNA test)

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.

How do I prepare for these tests?

For the sigmoidoscopy, colonoscopy, double-contrast barium enema, and the CT colonography, 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.

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.

How do I know if I need any of these tests?

- If you are 50 or older, you need to be tested for colorectal cancer.
- If someone in your family has had colorectal cancer, you might need to be tested before you're 50. Talk to your provider about your family history.
- If you have certain medical conditions, you might need to be tested for colorectal cancer earlier than age 50. Talk to your provider about this.

Which tests are best for me?

When polyps are found and removed, it can help keep some people from getting colorectal cancer. Tests that have the best chance of finding both polyps and cancer should be your first choice when possible. Talk with your health care provider to find out which tests you can get, and then decide which test you want to have.

The American Cancer Society recommends that starting at age 50 you have one of these tests:

Tests that find polyps and cancer

Flexible sigmoidoscopy* every 5 years, or

Colonoscopy every 10 years, or

Double-contrast barium enema* every 5 years, or

CT colonography (virtual colonoscopy)* every 5 years

Tests that find cancer

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

Yearly fecal immunochemical test (FIT),* or

Stool DNA test (sDNA)* every 3 years

**If any of these tests are abnormal, you will need to have a colonoscopy.*

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 anytime – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week – 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.

Together, we can help stop colorectal cancer before it starts. Talk to your provider about getting tested for colorectal cancer.



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 – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



cancer.org | 1.800.227.2345
1.866.228.4327 TTY

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