

## Types of Screening Tests

Several different screening tests can be used to test for polyps or colorectal cancer. Each can be used alone. Sometimes they are used in combination with each other.

**Fecal Occult Blood Test or Stool Test** - A test you do at home using a test kit you get from your health care provider. You put stool samples on test cards and return the cards to the doctor or a lab. This test checks for occult (hidden) blood in the stool.

**Flexible Sigmoidoscopy** - A test in which the doctor puts a short, thin, flexible, lighted tube into your rectum. The doctor checks for polyps or cancer in the rectum and lower third of the colon. Sometimes this test is used in combination with the fecal occult blood test.

**Colonoscopy** - This test is similar to flexible sigmoidoscopy, except the doctor uses a longer, thin, flexible, lighted tube to check for polyps or cancer in the rectum and the entire colon. During the test, the doctor can find and remove most polyps and some cancers.

**Double Contrast Barium Enema** - A test in which you are given an enema with a liquid called barium. The doctor takes x-rays of your colon. The barium allows the doctor to see the outline of your colon to check for polyps or other abnormalities.

For more information about colorectal cancer, visit

[www.cdc.gov/cancer/ScreenforLife](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/ScreenforLife)

Or call the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service:

**1-800-4-CANCER**

For **TTY**, call **1-800-332-8615**

To find out about Medicare coverage, call

**1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227).**

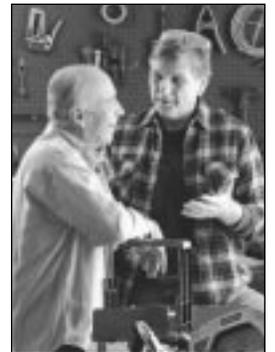
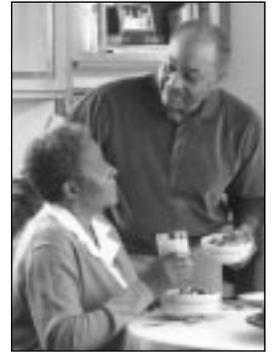


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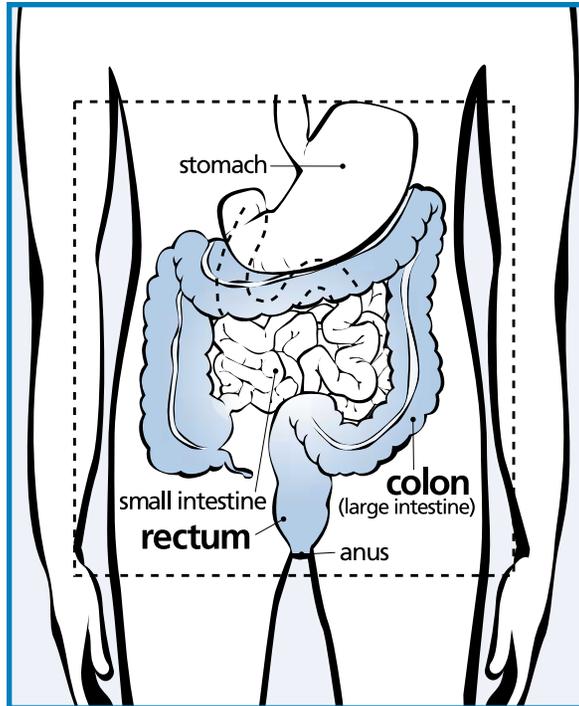
# Colorectal Cancer Screening

**SAVES LIVES**



## What is Colorectal Cancer?

Colorectal cancer is cancer that occurs in the colon or rectum. The colon is the large intestine or large bowel. The rectum is the passageway connecting the colon to the anus.



## The Second Leading Cancer Killer

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cancer killer in the U.S. But if everyone 50 or older had regular screening tests, at least one third of deaths from this cancer could be avoided.

## Who Gets Colorectal Cancer?

Colorectal cancer occurs most often in people age 50 and older. The risk increases with age. Both men and women can get colorectal cancer.

## Are You at High Risk?

Your risk for colorectal cancer may be higher than average if you or a close relative have had colorectal polyps or cancer or if you have inflammatory bowel disease. Speak with your doctor about having earlier or more frequent tests if you think you're at high risk for colorectal cancer.



## Screening Saves Lives

If you're 50 or older, getting a screening test for colorectal cancer could save your life. Here's how:

- Colorectal cancer usually starts from polyps in the colon or rectum. A polyp is a growth that shouldn't be there.
- Over time, some polyps can turn into cancer.
- Screening tests can find polyps, so they can be removed *before* they turn into cancer.
- Screening tests can also find colorectal cancer early, when the chance of being cured is good.

## What are the Symptoms?

People who have polyps or colorectal cancer don't always have symptoms, especially at first. Someone could have polyps or colorectal cancer and not know it. If there are symptoms, they may include:

- Blood in or on your stool (bowel movement).
- Stomach aches, pains, or cramps that happen a lot and you don't know why.
- A change in bowel habits, such as having stools that are narrower than usual.
- Losing weight and you don't know why.

If you have any of these symptoms, talk to your doctor. These symptoms may be caused by something other than cancer. However, the only way to know what is causing them is to see your doctor.

## Insurance Coverage

Many insurance plans and Medicare help pay for colorectal cancer screening. Check with your plan to find out which tests are covered for you.

## The Bottom Line

If you're 50 or older, talk with your doctor about getting screened.