

Colorectal Cancer Screening

What is colorectal cancer?

Colorectal cancer is a type of cancer that starts in either the **colon** (large bowel or large intestine) or the **rectum** (the end of the large intestine that connects your colon to the anus). The risk of a person having colorectal cancer in their lifetime is about 1 in 19, or about 5%. Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer found in people in the U.S. One of the many factors that can predict having colorectal cancer is family history. Factors that increase your risk of developing colorectal cancer include:

- Personal history of colorectal cancer
- Personal history of **precancerous polyps** (small growths of tissue that could develop into cancer)
- Personal history of inflammatory bowel disease (like ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease)
- Personal history of hereditary colorectal cancer
- Family history of colorectal cancer
- Family history of precancerous polyps

Why should I get a colorectal cancer screening?

When colorectal cancers are found and treated at an early stage (and have not spread beyond the colon or rectum), they are very curable. Even better, colorectal cancer screening can find and remove polyps at a precancerous stage, preventing cancer from developing at all.

When should I get a colorectal cancer screening?

Screening for colorectal cancer is recommended for everyone ages 45-75.

Depending on your personal and family history you may need to be screened before age 45. The purpose of a cancer screening test is to find and remove any precancerous polyps you have. This prevents the development of cancer, or helps you find any colorectal cancer in its earliest stages. The earlier cancer is detected, the better your chances of fully recovering from it. By the time you have symptoms, cancer may have already started to spread.

What tests are used for colorectal cancer screening?

Michigan Medicine offers four different screening options. The most important thing is for you to get screened, no matter which test is done.

Colonoscopy

A colonoscopy is the most reliable way to prevent and find colon cancer. Since most colon cancer begins as precancerous polyps (called **adenomas**), finding and removing these polyps is important for preventing cancer. In this procedure, your doctor will use a tube-like device (**colonoscope**) to look inside your rectum and colon for polyps, abnormal areas, and cancer. Your doctor can also take tissue samples (this is called a **biopsy**) and remove abnormal growths or polyps. You will drink a laxative before the test to clear out your colon, and you will need someone to drive you to and from the test. Doctors generally recommend that you repeat this test every 10 years, but your doctor may ask you to get screened again sooner based on the test findings and your health history.

Fecal immunochemical test (FIT)

This is a home **stool** (poop) test that is used to look for possible signs of colorectal cancer. FIT looks for a specific type of blood in the stool, which can be a sign that you have polyps in your colon. You will complete this test at home using a special stool collection kit, and you do not need any special diet or preparation. You must complete this test every year. If the test shows that

you have the specific type of blood in your stool, your doctor will ask you to get a colonoscopy.

Stool DNA testing (Cologuard® test)

This is a home stool test to check for genetic changes which might be a sign of polyps or cancer. You will complete this test at home using a special collection kit, and you do not need any special diet or preparation. You must be complete this test every 3 years. If the test shows that you have genetic changes that could mean polyps or cancer, your doctor will ask you to get a colonoscopy.

Flexible sigmoidoscopy

Your doctor will use a tube-like device to look inside your rectum and lower colon for polyps, abnormal areas, or cancer. This test looks at only the lower third of the colon. You will do an **enema** (fluid injection into your rectum) just before the test to clear out your colon, and you will need someone to drive you to and from the test.

Which test is right for me?

Talk to your doctor about your personal and family health history and any symptoms you may have. This will help you and your doctor decide which test is best for you.

Where can I ask questions and find more information?

Contact your health care provider to talk about which screening option is best for you. Visit any of these helpful websites for more information.

	<u>Centers for Disease Control: Colorectal Cancer Screening Tests</u>
	<u>American Cancer Society: Colorectal Cancer - Early Detection, Diagnosis, and Staging</u>
	<u>American College of Gastroenterology: Colorectal Cancer</u>
	<u>“Colorectal Cancer: You Can Prevent It” flyer</u> from the American College of Gastroenterology
	<u>Colorectal Cancer Awareness infographic</u> from the American College of Gastroenterology

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