

Guidelines & Recommendations for Colorectal Cancer Screening from Professional Organizations

The following guidelines are schedules recommended by two different professional groups for screening adults at average risk for colorectal cancer. Though both groups differ in some areas, both recommend screening beginning at age 50, with repeat screenings over time. If you are at higher risk due to personal or family history, you may need to be screened earlier and more often. Be sure to talk with your doctor about how and when *you* should have colorectal cancer screening.

American Cancer Society, the U.S. Multi-Society Task Force on Colorectal Cancer, and the American College of Radiology

American Cancer Society (ACS), the U.S. Multi-Society Task Force on Colorectal Cancer, and the American College of Radiology recommend the following guidelines for colorectal cancer screening.

Beginning at age 50, both men and women should follow one of these testing schedules.^{1,2}

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 primarily find cancer:

- yearly fecal occult blood test (FOBT)**, or
- yearly fecal immunochemical test (FIT)**, or
- stool DNA test (DNA), interval uncertain**^{1,2}

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

** The multiple stool take-home test should be used. One test done by the doctor in the office is not adequate for testing. A colonoscopy should be done if the test is positive.

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommends the following guidelines for colorectal cancer screening for men and women aged 50-75 using:^{3,4}

- high-sensitivity fecal occult blood testing (FOBT), once per year; or
- flexible sigmoidoscopy, every 5 years; or
- colonoscopy every 10 years.*^{3,4}

*Note that colonoscopy is used as a follow-up test if anything unusual is found during one of the other screening tests.³

“The USPSTF recommends against routine screening for colorectal cancer in adults 76 to 85 years of age.”⁴ There may be considerations that support colorectal cancer screening in an individual patient. The decision to be screened after age 75 should be made on an individual basis. If you are older than 75, ask your doctor if you should be screened.³

“The USPSTF recommends against screening for colorectal cancer in adults older than age 85 years.”⁴

“The USPSTF concludes that the evidence is insufficient to assess the benefits and harms of computed tomographic colonography and fecal DNA testing as screening modalities for colorectal cancer.”⁴

For higher risk groups, see Colon Cancer Screening Guidelines recommended [here](#).

Talk to your doctor about which test or tests are right for you.

Be sure to talk with your doctor about how and when you should have colorectal cancer screening.

Sources

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2. Levine B, Lieberman DA, MacFarland B, Smith RA, Brooks D, Andrews KS, Dash C, Giardiello FM, Glick S, Levin TR, Pickhardt P, Rex DK, Thorson A, and Winawer SJ. Screening and surveillance for the early detection of colorectal cancer and adenomatous polyps, 2008: A joint guideline from the American Cancer Society, the U.S. Multi-Society Task Force on Colorectal Cancer, and the American College of Radiology. *CA Cancer Journal for Clinicians*; 58; 130-160.
3. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2009). Colorectal cancer screening [online]. Retrieved April 12, 2010. From http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/pdf/Basic_FS_Eng_Color.pdf.
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