Choosing the right colon cancer screening test

Are you age 50 - 74 years old?

YES

Testing IS recommended.

If someone in your family has had colorectal cancer or polyps
OR
If you have had inflammatory bowel disease or other risk factors:
Testing MAY BE recommended.

NO

If you are 75 years or older:
Testing MAY BE recommended.

If you are younger than 50 years old (with no family history of or other risk factors for colorectal cancer):
Testing IS NOT recommended

Read about your options below. Talk with your doctor about which test is right for you.

Stool test*

Key facts
• Reduces death from colorectal cancer by detecting cancers early
• Safe, available and easy to complete
• Done on your own at home
• Finds cancer early by finding blood in the stool
• Finds most cancers early when done every year

Things to consider
• The test may be positive even if you do not have polyps or cancer in the colon.
• If the test is positive, you will have a colonoscopy to look for problems.
• In-home testing requires collecting a small stool sample using the test kit provided, then mailing or taking it to your doctor’s office or lab for processing.

*Stool test = Guaiac Fecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT) or Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT)

Colonoscopy

Key facts
• Reduces the risk of death by 60% by detecting colorectal cancer early
• Can prevent cancer by removing polyps (or abnormal growths in the colon) during the test
• Looks at the entire colon
• Finds most cancers or polyps that are there when the test is done
• Done at least every 10 years or as recommended by your doctor

Things to consider
• Stomach pain, cramping or bloating is possible before, during or after the test.
• The test is done at a hospital or clinic, and you will probably receive light sedation so that you are comfortable.
• You will need someone to drive you home after the test and may need to take the whole day off to rest.
• You will take medicine to clear out your colon the day before. You will also only drink clear liquids. This can cause pain, bloating and diarrhea while your colon clears.
• There is a small risk of serious complications like bleeding or perforated colon.

Please ask your doctor about other screening tests that are available.