They know how to prevent **colon cancer** – and you can, too.

Take a look inside.

American Cancer Society®

THE OFFICIAL SPONSOR OF BIRTHDAYS®

Talk to your doctor about getting tested for colon cancer.

Here are some questions to help you get started.

If you're 50 or older, you need to get tested for colon cancer.

It's one cancer that can actually be prevented!

Colon 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 colon cancer. Most colon cancers occur in men and women who are 50 or older.

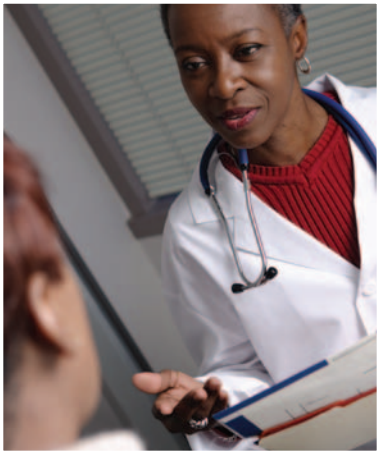
But no one in your family has had colon cancer?

Most people who get colon cancer have no family history of the disease. And you can have the disease and not even know it. If you have a parent, brother, sister, or child who has had colon cancer, then testing is even more important for you.

Get tested.

You have the power to stop colon cancer before it starts. Colon cancer begins with a growth (a polyp) that is not yet cancer. Testing can help your doctor tell whether there is a problem, and some tests can find polyps before they become cancer. Most people who have polyps removed never get colon cancer. If colon cancer is found, you have a good chance of beating it with treatment if it is found early. And testing can find it early.

We believe that **preventing** colon cancer (and not just finding it early) should be a major reason for getting tested. Finding and removing polyps keep some people from getting colon 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 are willing to have them.



Talk to your doctor about getting tested for colon cancer.

If you're 50 or older, you need to get tested for colon cancer.

Ask for the test.

As you get older, you have more health concerns. Your doctor has a lot to talk to you about. If your doctor does not mention getting tested for colon cancer, don't be afraid to ask about it. There's more than one way to get tested, so you and your doctor should choose the test that's best for you.

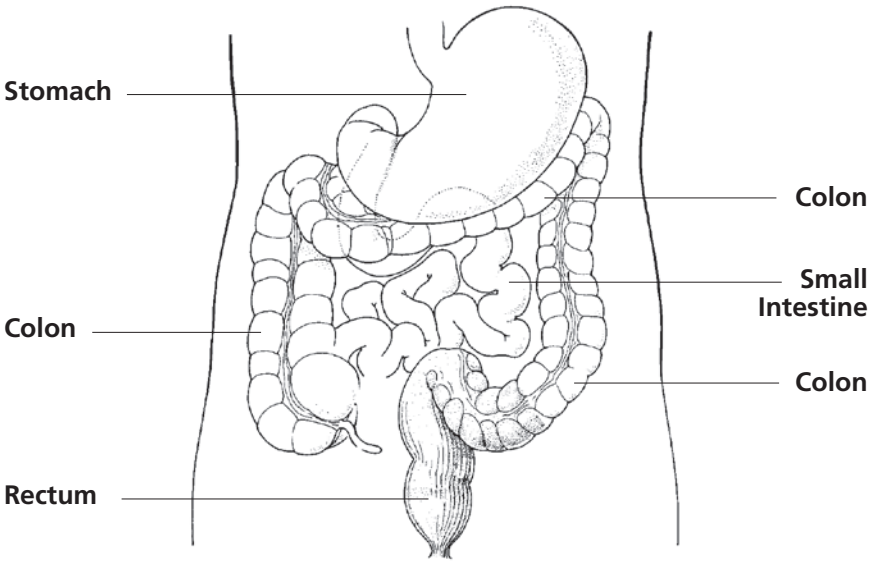
You owe it to yourself and the people who love you to take care of yourself.

What is colon cancer?

Cancer of the colon or rectum is called colon 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.



What are the tests for polyps and colon cancer?

Flexible sigmoidoscopy

The doctor uses a lighted tube to look inside your rectum and lower part of the colon. The doctor will be looking for cancer or a polyp 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 see only the lower part of the colon. If any growths or polyps are found, a colonoscopy will likely be done.

Colonoscopy

The doctor uses a lighted tube to look inside your colon. This test allows the doctor to see the entire colon. The doctor will be looking for cancer or a polyp that could turn into cancer. If they see any polyps or growths, they can remove the polyp or take a piece of the growth and test it for cancer. Patients are usually given a mild sedative for a colonoscopy.

Barium enema

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

What are the tests for colon cancer?

Fecal occult blood test (FOBT)

Your doctor will give you a test kit to take home. You will smear a small amount of your bowel movement on a card. You will do this for 3 bowel movements. The cards are returned to your doctor's office or lab to be tested. Testing will tell your doctor if blood is present. If blood is present, a colonoscopy will need to be done to find the exact cause of the blood. This test will find some cancers in the colon, but it can also miss some.

Fecal immunochemical test (FIT)

Your doctor will give you a test kit to take home. You will put a small amount of your bowel movement or water from the toilet bowl 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 that your doctor gives you. The cards are returned to your doctor's office or a lab to be tested. Testing will tell your doctor if there is blood in your bowel movement. If blood is found, a colonoscopy will need to be done

to find the exact cause of the blood. This test will find some colon cancers, but it can also miss some.

Stool DNA test (sDNA test)

(This test is not currently available.)

This test checks the stool for cancer cells. Your doctor will give you a test kit to take home. You will collect one entire bowel movement and return it to a lab to be tested. This test will find some colon cancers, but it can also miss some. The test costs more than the other stool tests, and we do not yet know how often the test should be done. If a test is abnormal, a colonoscopy will need to be done. No advance preparation is needed for the stool tests. You will follow the instructions of the kit and will need to return the kits to either your doctor or lab for testing.

How do I prepare for these tests?

For the sigmoidoscopy, the colonoscopy, barium enema, and the CT colonography, your colon will need to be cleaned out as much as possible. You may be asked to have only clear liquids and no food for some time before the test. You will take a laxative 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 will follow the instructions of the kit and will need to return the kits to either your doctor or 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 colon cancer.
- If someone in your family has had colon cancer, you might need to be tested before you are 50. Talk to your doctor about your family history.
- If you have certain medical conditions, you might need to be tested for colon cancer earlier than age 50. Talk to your doctor about this.

Which tests are best for me?

Finding and removing polyps keep some people from getting colon cancer. Tests that have the best chance of finding both polyps and cancer should be your first choice when possible. Talk with your doctor or nurse to find out which tests you can get, and then decide which test you want to have.

The American Cancer Society recommends that 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 fecal occult blood test (FOBT),* or

Yearly fecal immunochemical test (FIT),* or

Stool DNA test (sDNA),* ** interval uncertain

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

***This test is not currently available.*

How can I find out more about colon cancer?

Asking about colon cancer testing isn't always easy. The American Cancer Society can help. Call us anytime, day or night, at 1-800-227-2345. We can tell you more about the tests, help you talk to your doctor, or just listen to your concerns.

Together, we can stop colon cancer before it starts. Talk to your doctor about getting tested for colon cancer. The next page has some questions to help you get started.

Questions to ask your doctor if you are 50 or older:

- I've read that there's more than one test for colon cancer. Which one do you think is right for me?
- How is the test done? How do I prepare for it? What will happen to me, and how will it feel?
- Now that I'm 50, what other tests for cancer should I have?

cancer.org

1.800.227.2345

American Cancer Society®

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For cancer information, answers, and support, call your American Cancer Society 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 1-800-227-2345.

American Cancer Society®

We **save lives** and create more birthdays by helping you stay well, helping you get well, by finding cures, and by fighting back.

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