

Colon cancer screening and prevention

What you need to know

Colon cancer is the third-leading cause of cancer death in the United States.¹ Fortunately, colon cancer can often be detected early, when chances for successful treatment are higher.²



Screening is important

Screening should begin at age 45 for people at average risk. Your doctor may recommend screening earlier if you have a family history of colon cancer or certain medical conditions.



You have choices

Colonoscopy used to be the only reliable screening choice. Today, there are several options. Talk them over with your doctor. Together, you can decide which test is appropriate for you. See the screening descriptions for more information.



There's no cost

Most preventive screenings for colon cancer are 100% covered.* Keep in mind, if screening leads to a positive result, you may have to pay some of the costs of follow-up tests or care. Your plan documents explain what's covered and your cost-shares.



Lifestyle matters

Exercise and maintaining a healthy weight can reduce your risk of colon cancer. Limiting alcohol, processed and red meats, and not smoking can help reduce your risk even more. The American Cancer Society's website, [cancer.org](https://www.cancer.org), has more examples of ways to help prevent cancer.



Now what?

Contact your doctor to figure out your risk factors and identify the best test for you.

Don't have a primary care provider (PCP)? Visit connecticare.com or call us at the number on your member ID card. We'd be happy to help.

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Colon cancer screening options

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends screening for colorectal cancer starting at age 45. Potential screening methods include a fecal occult blood test (gFOBT), fecal immunochemical test (FIT), colonoscopy, colonography (CTC), or flexible sigmoidoscopy, among others. Your doctor may recommend a different frequency depending on your results or other health factors.

Screening type	What's involved	How often
Colonoscopy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examines the entire colon Sedation is required Polyps can be removed for biopsy during a colonoscopy Done in an outpatient setting, such as an ambulatory surgical center 	Every 10 years
Colonography (CTC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examines entire colon No sedation necessary Polyps cannot be removed or biopsied Exposure to low-dose radiation via x-ray Colonoscopy necessary if positive 	Every 5 years
Flexible sigmoidoscopy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examines the lower third of the colon Does not require sedation or a specialist Performed in a doctor's office or outpatient setting Colonoscopy necessary if positive 	Every 5 years
Fecal immunochemical test (FIT) (iFOBT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noninvasive test Looks for blood in the stool No dietary restrictions You do it at home Colonoscopy necessary if positive 	Every year
Fecal occult blood test (gFOBT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noninvasive test Looks for blood in the stool Some dietary restrictions You do it at home Colonoscopy necessary if positive 	Every year
Cologuard**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noninvasive test Looks at the DNA in your stool for cancerous or precancerous cells Done at home or in a doctor's office Colonoscopy necessary if positive 	Every 3 years

Screening for Colorectal Cancer US Preventive Services Task Force Recommendation Statement.

JAMA. 2021;325(19):1965-1977. doi:10.1001/jama.2021.6238 Corrected on August 24, 2021.

[uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf/document/RecommendationStatementFinal/colorectal-cancer-screening](https://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf/document/RecommendationStatementFinal/colorectal-cancer-screening)

¹U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. Final Recommendation Statement: Colorectal Cancer: Screening. June 2016. Accessed Aug. 12, 2021.

<https://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf/recommendation/colorectal-cancer-screening>.

²American Cancer Society. Can Colorectal Polyps and Cancer Be Found Early? Accessed Feb. 14, 2022. <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/colon-rectal-cancer/detection-diagnosis-staging/detection.html>.

* 100% covered preventive care means that you will not have a copay or have to pay money toward your deductible or coinsurance for the services. Sometimes, a preventive care visit leads to other medical care or tests, even at the same appointment. You should check with your doctor or doctor's staff during your visit to see if there are services you may be billed for.

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