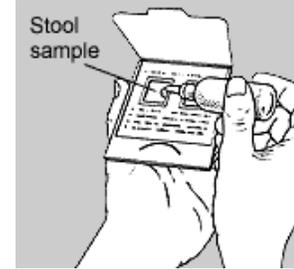


SCREENING FOR COLORECTAL CANCER

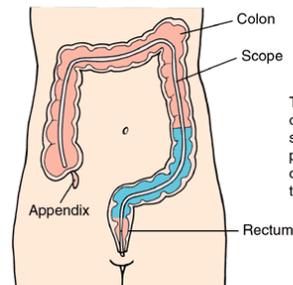
Over 100,000 people will find out they have colorectal cancer this year. It is the 3rd most common cancer in the US. Screening is a good way to reduce your chances of dying from colorectal cancer. Several different colorectal cancer screening tests are available. Each test has advantages and disadvantages. You and your doctor can decide which test is right for you.

Fecal Occult Blood Testing (FOBT) has to be done once a year, but you can do it at home. A special kit is used to collect a small sample of stool (feces). You return the kit to the lab, where the sample is tested for blood. If the test finds blood, then you'll need a colonoscopy (see below).



Sigmoidoscopy is done every 5 years, usually in the doctor's office. A flexible tube is passed through the rectum into the lower part of your colon. The person doing this test "looks" into your colon through this tube. If an abnormal area is seen, it can sometimes be removed and sent to the lab for testing. If you choose this test, you will receive special instructions on how to get your colon cleaned out for this procedure.

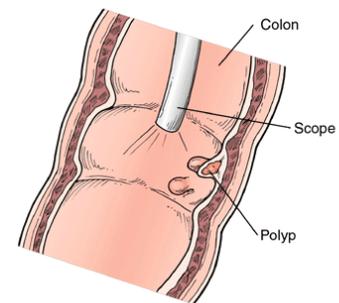
Colonoscopy/Sigmoidoscopy



The sigmoid colon is the last part of the colon (shown in blue). A sigmoidoscopy checks just this part of the colon. A colonoscopy checks the whole colon all the way to the appendix.

You can have the FOBT or sigmoidoscopy, or both.

Colonoscopy is similar to sigmoidoscopy, but is only done every 10 years. With a colonoscopy, the tube is inserted into the entire length of the colon. Abnormal areas can be removed for testing. This procedure can be uncomfortable, so you will be given medication to help you relax. If you choose this test, you will receive special instructions on how to get your colon cleaned out for this procedure.



All of the above tests for screening are reasonably accurate when done regularly and correctly. The differences between the tests are mainly the side effects and complications. Sigmoidoscopy and colonoscopy take longer than FOBT, may be more unpleasant to go through, and can cause complications (like unintended rupturing of the colon).

Most people should be screened for colorectal cancer starting at age 50. Some people should begin earlier than age 50. Talk with your doctor about when you should be screened and which screening test is best for you. If you are 76-85 years of age, ask your doctor if you still need to be screened. Most people over 85 years old do not need to get screened.