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Colon Cancer Screenings: What You Need to Know

Colorectal cancer (CRC) is a type of cancer that affects the colon or rectum. CRC screenings can help detect cancer in the early stages.

Certain groups of people are at a higher risk of CRC:²

- Men
- Black adults
- Jews of Eastern European descent (Ashkenazi Jews)
- American Indians
- Alaskan Natives
- People who have a family history of CRC
- People with obesity or diabetes

Current [guidelines](#) suggest that people between the ages of 45 and 75 get screened for CRC.² If you have a family history of CRC, your healthcare provider may suggest that you begin testing earlier.

Colonoscopy is the most common way to diagnose colon cancer, but there are less invasive stool-based, at-home test kits that can detect issues as well. Check with your doctor to see if the following test options may be right for you.

- **High-Sensitivity Guaiac Fecal Occult Blood Tests (gFOBT)** check for the presence of blood in the stool.
- **Fecal Immunochemical (FIT) Tests** use antibodies to check for blood in the stool, and a positive test result may indicate the presence of polyps or CRC.¹

- **sDNA-FIT Tests** use a combination of DNA biomarkers and the FIT Test to detect cancer within cells that shed from the lining of the colon and rectum.

If your stool-based test is positive, discuss your results with your healthcare provider, who will likely order colonoscopy to complete the screening process.¹

There are a few things you can do to reduce your risk of developing CRC:³

- **Diet:** Eat a wide variety of colorful, high-fiber foods and limit red meat (beef, pork, and lamb) and processed meats.
- **Exercise:** Aim for at least 30 minutes of physical activity every day.
- **Alcohol:** Drink alcohol in moderation, if at all. (Moderation is defined as up to 1 drink per day for women and up to 2 drinks per day for men.)
- **Smoking:** If you use tobacco, create a quit plan today.

Healthy lifestyle behaviors and early detection are two important tools to help prevent colorectal cancer.

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). [Colorectal Cancer Screening Tests](#). Last reviewed Feb 23, 2023. Accessed Aug 31, 2023.

2. U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF). [Colorectal Cancer: Screening](#). May 18, 2021. Accessed Sept 10, 2023.

3. American Cancer Society (ACS). [Colorectal Cancer Risk Factors](#). Last Revised: July 19, 2023. Accessed Sept 19, 2023.



The Power of Prevention

Prevention is about taking action to protect your health. Detecting health problems early may help prevent or slow the progression to a more complicated medical condition.

Preventive care includes staying current on relevant health screenings, practicing self-care, and visiting your healthcare provider regularly for check-ups. Routine care helps you maintain good health, save on medical expenses, and live longer.¹

There are 3 main categories of health prevention:³

1. **Primary Prevention** is when you make healthy life-style choices that reduce your risk of illness. Examples include healthy eating, getting vaccinations, and being physically active.
2. **Secondary Prevention** is when you stay current with recommended screenings and testing to help identify health concerns in the earliest stages.
3. **Tertiary Prevention** is when you take proactive steps to manage an existing condition in order to slow its progression and avoid complications.

The most powerful prevention plans incorporate strategies within all relevant categories.

Another aspect of prevention is learning how to recognize changes in your health. When you notice a change, it is important to connect with a member of your healthcare team without delay.

Here are just a few examples of changes that warrant a visit to your healthcare provider:²

- Feeling a lump or growth anywhere on your body
- A fever that is above 103° Fahrenheit (39.4° Celsius) or lingers for more than three days
- A cough that will not go away
- Unexplained body aches or pains
- Severe or intense pain anywhere in your body
- Changes in your bowel movements or blood in your stool
- Moles or growths on your skin that have gotten worse
- Unplanned weight loss

Detecting health issues before they become more advanced is a key element of prevention. If you recognize a change in your health, take immediate action and seek guidance from a medical professional. Telehealth is also a convenient option if you live in a remote location or have scheduling challenges.²

Prevention is about taking action to protect your health.

1. Healthline. [What Is Preventive Health and Why Is It Important?](#) Feb 7, 2023. Accessed Sept 3, 2023.

2. Reed M, Huang J, Graetz I, Muelly E, Millman A, Lee C. Treatment and Follow-up Care Associated With Patient-Scheduled Primary Care Telemedicine and In-Person Visits in a Large Integrated Health System. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2021 Nov 1;4(11):e2132793. doi: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.32793. PMID: 34783828; PMCID: PMC8596201.

3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). [Prevention](#). Accessed Sept 19, 2023.



Preventive Care Checklist

Staying up to date with health screenings and routine testing can help reduce your risk of preventable, chronic health conditions like diabetes, cancer, and heart disease.

The US Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) has up-to-date information on essential screenings that are designed to detect health problems early.¹ Screening recommendations are generally categorized by age, sex, associated medical conditions, and health risk factors.²

Getting a wellness check-up every year is one way to stay current with recommended health screenings and tests. If it has been more than a year since you visited your healthcare provider, set aside some time and schedule an appointment right away. Annual wellness visits give you the opportunity to address medical questions and concerns with your provider.

Here are some examples of preventive care to discuss with your provider:

Annual Wellness Visits

- General check-up (blood pressure, body temperature, height, and weight)
- Annual dental cleaning and exam
- Annual eye exam
- Well baby/child visits

Blood Work

Your healthcare provider may also recommend a number of blood tests that are necessary based on your age, health risks, symptoms, family history, and existing medical conditions.

Condition-Specific Screenings

- Stool-based colorectal-cancer (CRC) screening-test or colonoscopy
- Mammogram
- Pap smear
- Prostate cancer screening
- Type 2 diabetes screening
- Bone density screening

Immunizations

- Flu shot
- Shingles
- Pneumonia
- Tetanus
- Hepatitis B
- Child vaccinations
- HPV
- Any relevant travel vaccines
- COVID-19

Other Screenings

- Alcohol use screening
- Sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing³
- Depression screening
- Skin cancer screening

Certain health conditions may require ongoing testing and screening. The results of these tests can also help your healthcare team determine if your current treatment plan is working, or if changes may be needed.

Prevention is a powerful tool that can help you avoid costly medical conditions and protect your health.

1. US Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF). A & B Recommendations. Accessed Sept 13, 2023.

2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Are You Up to Date on Your Preventive Care? Accessed Sept 13, 2023.

3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Screening Recommendations and Considerations Referenced in Treatment Guidelines and Original Sources. June 6, 2022. Accessed Sept 8, 2023.

Stay healthy by moving and exercising

Your body is designed to move, and it helps you stay strong, flexible and fit.

Movement is just changing your location and position, like walking to your mailbox. Exercise takes more effort, like playing sports, swimming or dancing. And both movement and exercise are important for your overall well-being.



6 easy ways to get started

Most adults should get 150 minutes of moderate activity each week. But you can work up to it gradually.



1. See a chance, take it

Even if you only have 10 minutes, it's worth the effort. Keep a pair of sneakers close by for convenience.



2. Add some extra effort

Everyday tasks count as exercise. Try housework, yardwork or gardening.



3. Stay hydrated

Drink plenty of water before, during and after exercise. It goes a long way in helping you feel your best.



4. Stack tasks

Try taking a conference call while you walk. Or walk around the field during your kids' sports practice.



5. Play

Play is good for people of all ages. Look for fun ways to be active with people you enjoy.



6. Warm up and cool down

Start and end each session slowly. Begin with a gentler version of your routine and build up.

Be sure to check with your doctor before starting any exercise plan. Together, you can decide what works best for you.

*FOR 20 MINUTES A DAY: American Heart Association. [No time for exercise? Here are seven easy ways to move more!](#) Last reviewed: January 22, 2024. Accessed March 27, 2024.

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DID YOU KNOW?

Regular exercise can boost your brain health, help manage weight, lower risk of disease and more.

Try to be active for about 20 minutes a day.*

And look for fun ways to include exercise into your day.



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Brussels Sprouts With Balsamic Glaze

Ingredients

- 3 cups fresh Brussels sprouts (about 12 ounces)

Balsamic Glaze:

- 1/4 cup balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon honey, or to taste
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon minced peeled fresh ginger
- 1 teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 small tomato, seeded and chopped
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Instructions

1. Remove any yellow leaves from the Brussels sprouts and rinse them thoroughly. Trim the bottoms and with the tip of a knife make an X in each stem and end to help the sprouts cook evenly.
2. Place a steamer basket inside a pot and add about 2 inches of water. Bring the water to a boil and put the sprouts in the steamer. Cover and steam over high heat for about 10 minutes until the sprouts are bright green and just tender, but still crisp.
3. While Brussels sprouts are cooking combine vinegar, honey, garlic, ginger, oil, tomato and salt and pepper in a blender and blend just until pureed.
4. Transfer pureed mixture to a nonstick pot and bring to a boil and then immediately reduce the heat to medium. Cook stirring frequently for about 5 minutes until the sauce is slightly syrupy.
5. Drizzle the sauce over hot Brussels sprouts and serve immediately.

Prep Time	Servings
15 minutes	4



Nutrition Facts

Calories	50
Total Fat	1g
Sodium	15mg
Carbohydrate	9g
Dietary Fiber	2g
Protein	2g

☒ Prevent

☐ Cure