

Cancer Screenings

WHAT ARE CANCER SCREENINGS AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

Cancer Screening is the process of checking for cancer cells that are present - or abnormal cells that could become cancer - often before symptoms appear.

The **goal of screening** is to detect cancer early, or prevent it from starting, which can lead to better treatment outcomes and higher survival rates.

These routine, preventive tests **can - and do - save lives.**

TYPES OF SCREENINGS

Screenings may include physical exams, lab tests, genetic testing, and imaging, and can depend on your gender, types of cancer, and risk factors.

- **Breast Cancer Screening** - The most common screening is the **mammogram**, which is an x-ray picture of the breast. If you have dense breasts or have a high risk due to family history, you may also have a **MRI** which uses radio waves, a strong magnet, and a computer to create detailed pictures of the inside of the breasts, or an **ultrasound**, which uses high-energy sound waves to look at tissues and organs inside the body.
- **Colorectal Cancer Screening** - The most common screening is the **colonoscopy**, an outpatient procedure usually performed under sedation, used to examine the lining of the rectum and large intestine (colon) for abnormalities like polyps, tumors, or inflammation. A gastroenterologist inserts a flexible, lighted tube (colonoscope) through the rectum, viewing the colon on a monitor. If polyps are found, they may be removed during the procedure.
- **Lung Cancer Screening - Low-dose computed tomography** (a low-dose CT or LDCT) is recommended. While lying on a table, an x-ray machine takes detailed images of your lungs - the scan is non-invasive and takes less than one minute.
- **Cervical Cancer Screening** - The most common screening is the **Pap smear** (Pap test), during which, using a speculum, a doctor collects cells from inside the cervix and area around it. The cells are sent to a lab for examination. It is a similar procedure for the **HPV test** which looks for presence of the human papillomavirus cells, which cause most cervical cancers.
- **Prostate Cancer Screening** - Commonly the Prostate-Specific Antigen (**PSA test**), a blood test that measures a protein produced by the prostate. A digital rectal exam may also be done in addition to a PSA test. There, your doctor inserts a lubricated, gloved finger into your rectum to reach the prostate to feel for abnormal lumps or hard areas.

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SCREENING RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Breast Cancer - Women** ages 40-54 should consider yearly mammograms, switching to every two years or continuing yearly after 55. **High-risk men** may start annual mammograms around age 50 or earlier, depending on family history.
- **Colorectal Cancer** - The recommended age to begin routine colonoscopy screening is **age 45**. People with a family history of colorectal cancer, inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), or genetic syndromes that may predispose you to colorectal cancer, should begin screening earlier, as advised by a doctor. **If you experience symptoms** like blood in stool, persistent abdominal pain, or unexplained weight loss, you should consult a doctor regardless of age.
- **Lung Cancer** - LDCT scans are recommended for adults **aged 50-80** years if they have or have had a 20 pack-year smoking history (1 pack/day for 20 years, or 2 packs/day for 10 years) who are current smokers or have quit within the past 15 years.
- **Cervical Cancer** - Pap smears are recommended for **women starting at age 21**. Note: Vaccinated individuals should still follow the screening guidelines.
- **Prostate Cancer - Men aged 55 to 69** should make shared decisions with their doctor about PSA screening, balancing potential benefits against risks like overdiagnosis. **High-risk groups**, including Black men or those with a family history, should discuss starting screening earlier, generally around age 40 or 45.

ABOUT US

Our mission is to reach all people impacted by cancer - those diagnosed, their loved ones, and caregivers - so that **no one** faces cancer alone.

All our programs and services are **FREE** to our members.

OUR FREE SERVICES

- **MyGo2Support:** our mobile education & engagement program.
- Individual and group **support groups**
- **Mindfulness Programs:** yoga, meditation, T'ai Chi Chih.
- **Nutritional Classes**
- **Health Champion Program:** Learn how to support loved ones facing cancer.