

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 FOR COLORECTAL CANCER

- **Colonoscopy** - 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.
- **Sigmoidoscopy** - Unlike a colonoscopy, which examines the entire large intestine, a **sigmoidoscopy** only checks the lower third (sigmoid colon), which means it could miss abnormalities in the upper portion of the intestines. It is performed in a similar manner to a colonoscopy, but rarely requires sedation.

SCREENING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COLORECTAL CANCER

Screening recommendations may depend on your family history and risk factors.

- **Colonoscopy and Sigmoidoscopy** - The recommended age to begin routine 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** such as blood in stool, persistent abdominal pain, or unexplained weight loss, consult a doctor regardless of age.

GENETIC TESTING

- **Genetic Testing** - To learn if you have a predisposition or inherited risk of being diagnosed with colorectal cancer, you may undergo **genetic testing**. Using a sample of your blood or a swab of your saliva, a laboratory will analyze your DNA to identify any inherited gene mutations, such as **Lynch syndrome** or familial adenomatous polyposis (**FAP**), which can significantly increase the risk of developing the disease. The results help determine if additional screening or preventive measures are needed for you and your family.

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.

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