

CANCER EXPLAINED PRESENTS

A FREE HEALTH HANDOUT

COLORECTAL CANCER SCREENING

Screening starts at 45 — and you have options

FREE TO PRINT · PLAIN LANGUAGE · SOURCES ON THE BACK

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Colorectal Cancer Screening

Screening starts at 45 — and you have options

1 The basics

- [ ] Colorectal cancer often starts as a small growth (polyp) that takes years to become cancer — screening can find and remove polyps before that happens.
- [ ] Adults at average risk should screen regularly from age 45 to 75.
- [ ] From 76 to 85, decide with your doctor based on your health and past screening. Screening is not recommended after 85.
- [ ] A family history of colorectal cancer or polyps can mean starting earlier — tell your doctor.

2 Your test options

- [ ] At-home stool tests (FIT yearly, or stool DNA every 3 years): easy and non-invasive. Any positive result needs a timely follow-up colonoscopy, so the screening is complete.
- [ ] Colonoscopy (every 10 years if normal): examines the whole colon and can remove polyps during the same visit.
- [ ] Other options: CT colonography or sigmoidoscopy, each every 5 years. Blood tests are not a preferred first choice. Ask what's available to you.

3 Good to know

- [ ] The best test is the one you actually complete.
- [ ] Don't ignore symptoms: bleeding, persistent changes in bowel habits, or unexplained weight loss deserve a doctor visit at any age.

THE BOTTOM LINE

If you're 45 or older and haven't been screened, ask your doctor which colorectal screening option fits you.

Sources: USPSTF: Colorectal screening (uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf/recommendation/colorectal-cancer-screening) · NCI: Colorectal screening (cancer.gov/types/colorectal/patient/colorectal-screening-pdq) · ACS: Colorectal screening guideline (revised May 2026) (cancer.org/cancer/types/colon-rectal-cancer/detection-diagnosis-staging/acs-recommendations.html)

Learn more in plain language: cancerexplained.org/screening/colorectal-cancer-screening · **Updated:** 2026-11-05

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