SCREENING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF GASTROENTEROLOGY

In 2021, the American College of Gastroenterology updated its colorectal cancer screening guideline. Important recommendations from the authors of the guideline are summarized here.*

We recommend colorectal cancer screening in average-risk individuals between age 45 and 75 years to reduce pre-cancerous growths called advanced adenomas, reduce colorectal cancer, and reduce death from colorectal cancer.

We suggest that a decision to continue screening beyond age 75 years be personalized.

We recommend colonoscopy and FIT as the primary methods for colorectal cancer screening.

We suggest considering the following screening tests for individuals unable or unwilling to undergo a colonoscopy or FIT test: Flexible Sigmoidoscopy, Multitarget Stool DNA test, CT Colonography, or Colon Capsule.

RECOMMENDED FREQUENCY FOR DIFFERENT SCREENING TESTS

We recommend the following tests as the primary screening methods for patients at average risk for colorectal cancer on this schedule:

- Colonoscopy every ten years
- FIT every one year

If one of these alternatives is used, we suggest that the tests be done on this schedule:

- Multitarget stool DNA test every three years
- CT colonography every five years
- Flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 to 10 years
- Colon Capsule every five years

We suggest against Septin9 (blood-based test) for colorectal cancer screening.

SCREENING FOR PATIENTS WITH FAMILY HISTORY OF COLORECTAL CANCER OR POLYPS

For individuals with a family history of colorectal cancer

- If you have family history of colon cancer, you may need to talk with your health care provider to see if earlier and more frequent colonoscopy is required.
- Sometimes, genetic testing may be required to determine your risk of colon cancer if you have a strong family history, especially with younger age of affected relatives.

*Shaukat, et al., American College of Gastroenterology Guideline on Colorectal Cancer Screening, The American Journal of Gastroenterology, March 2021

To learn more visit gi.org/coloncancer

To find a gastroenterologist near you gi.org/patients/find-a-gastroenterologist
Colorectal screening is essential and lifesaving.

In the United States, colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer, yet it is one of the most preventable types of cancer. It is highly treatable and is often curable when caught early. Even during COVID-19, colorectal cancer screening is essential and should not be delayed.

The American College of Gastroenterology is dedicated to the early detection and prevention of colorectal cancer. Our experts know that colorectal cancer screening tests can save lives.

TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR HEALTH DURING COVID-19

It is essential to take control of your health. Make a plan to talk to your healthcare providers about colorectal screening and get checked.

COLORECTAL SCREENING IS SAFE AND IMPORTANT

Your healthcare team cares about your safety and comfort. During COVID-19, they are following careful steps and taking precautions to make sure you are safe when you have colonoscopy.

DON’T PUT OFF PREVENTIVE HEALTH SCREENINGS

During the pandemic, do not put off needed health care, especially preventive tests. Remember, the most common symptom of early colon and rectal cancers is NO symptom, so it is important to get screened early.

NEVER IGNORE NEW OR WORRYING SYMPTOMS

Even during COVID-19, it is important to reach out to your health care providers REGARDLESS of age. Do not hesitate to talk to your healthcare team about new or worrying bowel symptoms, even those that seem hard to discuss or share, including:

- Blood in the stool
- Change in bowel habits
- Change in the shape and size of the stool
- Rectal pain
- Abdominal pain
- Unexpected weight loss
- Unexplained or new anemia

LEARN ABOUT YOUR SCREENING OPTIONS

FOR COLORECTAL CANCER

ONETEP SCREENING VS. TWO-STEP SCREENING

The American College of Gastroenterology 2021 Guidelines on Colorectal Cancer Screening explain the difference between recommended tests that are “one-step tests” and “two-step tests.” In many instances, the best screening test is the one that gets done.

One-Step Test: Colonoscopy

Colonoscopy is a one-step test that looks for growths called polyps in your entire colon (large intestine) and rectum using a colonoscope. Your doctor can both detect and remove polyps during colonoscopy and prevent colorectal cancer. Colonoscopy is the most commonly performed gastrointestinal procedure in the United States. For people with colorectal cancer in their family or who have a personal history of colorectal polyps or cancer, colonoscopy is often recommended to begin at age 45 or earlier.

Two-Step Test: Stool-Based Tests

Stool-based tests are non-invasive and do not require an endoscopic procedure. Two-step stool-based tests that look for colorectal cancer or precancerous polyps include the FIT test, the CT colonography, and the Cologuard test.

FIT Test (Fecal Immunochemical Test)

The stool FIT test is typically performed on an annual basis. A positive result can then lead to a follow-up colonoscopy to confirm or rule out any potential issues.

Multitarget Stool DNA (mtDNA)

The mtDNA test is a non-invasive stool-based test that looks for abnormal DNA associated with colon cancer or precancerous polyps. This test is more sensitive than the FIT test, but your doctor may recommend it in addition to the FIT test.

Cologuard®

Cologuard® is a non-invasive stool-based test that looks for abnormal DNA associated with colon cancer or precancerous polyps. It is currently the only FDA-approved test for colorectal cancer screening.

Tests for Individuals who Cannot or Will Not Have a Colonoscopy or FIT, or Are Not Candidates for Colonoscopy

CT Colonography and Colon Capsule

At this time, CT colonography and colon capsule are options for individuals unwilling or unable to undergo colonoscopy or FIT, provided that the tests are available and reimbursed by insurers for screening. It is important to note that both tests will still require a follow-up colonoscopy if positive.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON COLORECTAL CANCER SCREENING, VISIT:

https://www.amgastro.org/Publications/Screening/Colorectal-Cancer-Screening-Guidance

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