Colon cancer awareness

What to know about screening and polyps

Colon cancer often starts as a polyp. Screening can find polyps so they can be removed before they turn into cancer.

How a polyp can become cancer

Healthy lining

A polyp grows
Most are not cancer, but some may turn into cancer over time.

The polyp is removed
Removing polyps during a colonoscopy helps prevent colon cancer.

When to get screened

- Start at age 45.
- Keep screening through age 75.
- Ages 76 to 85: ask your doctor.
- You may need to start earlier if you have a family history, past polyps, IBD or a genetic syndrome.
- If a parent, brother, sister or child had colon cancer or an advanced polyp before age 60: colonoscopy at 40, or 10 years before their diagnosis, whichever is earlier, then every 5 years.

Your test options

- Colonoscopy: every 10 years
- FIT stool test: every year
- Stool DNA-FIT test: every 1 to 3 years
- CT colonography: every 5 years
- Any abnormal test needs a follow-up colonoscopy.

Talk to your doctor about these symptoms

- A change in bowel habits
- Blood in or on your stool
- Diarrhea, constipation, or feeling that your bowel does not empty all the way
- Abdominal pain, aches or cramps that do not go away
- Weight loss you cannot explain
- Low iron levels (anemia)

Polyps and colon cancer can cause no symptoms. That is why screening matters.

If a polyp was found: what to do

1. Ask how many polyps were removed, their size and their type.
2. Get your biopsy results. They usually take 5 to 7 days.
3. Follow your discharge instructions, including those on aspirin and blood thinners.
4. Ask when your next colonoscopy is due, and put it on your calendar.
5. Tell your parents, brothers, sisters and children. They may need to start screening sooner.

Typical time to your next colonoscopy

No polyps	10 years
1 or 2 small adenomas	7 to 10 years
3 or 4 small adenomas	3 to 5 years
5 to 10 small adenomas	3 years
A large or advanced adenoma	3 years
More than 10 adenomas	1 year

An adenoma is a polyp that can turn into cancer. Small means under 10 mm. These are typical times for adults at average risk. Your doctor sets your date.

Ways to lower your risk

Keep a healthy weight | **Stay active** | **Eat vegetables, fruit and whole grains** | **Limit red and processed meat** | **Avoid alcohol or drink in moderation** | **Do not smoke**

General information for adults, not personal medical advice. Follow the plan your own own team gave you.

Questions or ready to schedule? Call (718) 615-0400. **Medical emergency? Call 911.**

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Sources

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- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Symptoms
- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, Colon polyps
- American Cancer Society, Prevention