

Are there any risks to screening?

Home stool tests may miss blood in the stool. A polyp or cancer can also be missed if they are not bleeding when the test is taken. So it is important to be screened regularly and to let your health care provider know if you develop symptoms such as a change in bowel habits, abdominal pain, or rectal bleeding. If you have an abnormal test result, you will be followed-up with a colonoscopy. The risks associated with having a colonoscopy are very low. These risks can be discussed with your physician.



About the Alberta Colorectal Cancer Screening Program

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in Alberta. There is strong medical evidence to show that colorectal cancer screening can reduce colorectal cancer deaths, yet less than 20% of Albertans aged 50 to 74 are presently screened. In order to increase participation in colorectal cancer screening and ensure that province-wide screening practices are evidence-based and of the highest standard and quality, the Alberta Colorectal Cancer Screening Program was launched in 2007. The program is coordinated and delivered by Alberta Health Services in partnership with your health care provider.

Screening is one of the most effective things you can do to prevent and detect cancer early. Colorectal, Breast and Cervical cancer screening saves lives.

For more information, please contact

Cancer Screening Programs

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screeningforlife.ca

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COLORECTAL CANCER SCREENING

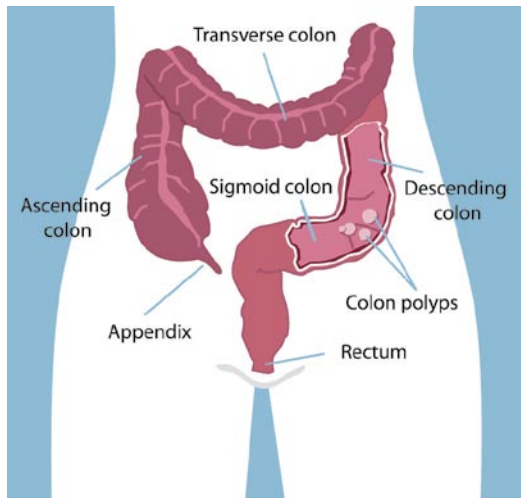
Frequently Asked Questions



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What is colorectal cancer?

Colorectal cancer is cancer that develops on the inner wall of the colon and rectum (also known as the large bowel or large intestine). The colon and the rectum are part of the digestive system. As cancers of the colon and rectum have many similar features, they are collectively referred to as *colorectal cancer*. Pre-cancerous polyps are small growths on the inner wall of the colon and rectum. These can develop and exist over a long period of time without any signs or symptoms before becoming cancer.



Who is at risk?

Men and women of any ethnic, racial or age group are at risk of colorectal cancer. The risk increases with age and approximately 90% of people who develop the disease are over the age of 50.

What causes colorectal cancer?

There is no single cause of colorectal cancer. Those at higher risk of developing colorectal cancer include people with a family history of the disease, a personal history of colorectal cancer or polyps, and people living with inflammatory bowel disease (ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease).

What can I do to reduce my risk?

To reduce your risk of colorectal cancer:

- **Get screened!**
- Increase dietary fiber and reduce intake of saturated fats
- Eat plenty of vegetables and fruit
- Reduce alcohol consumption to moderate or low levels
- Incorporate physical activity into your daily life
- Maintain a healthy body weight
- Quit smoking and stay tobacco-free

Who should be screened?

Everyone aged 50 to 74 should be screened for colorectal cancer regularly. Most cases of colorectal cancer occur in people age 50 and over at average risk.

Why should I be screened?

Approximately 1 in 14 men and 1 in 17 women in Alberta will develop colorectal cancer during their lifetime. This makes colorectal cancer the second leading cause of cancer deaths in our province for men and women combined. Colorectal cancer can develop and exist over a long period of time without any signs or symptoms. Screening is the only way to detect colorectal cancer at its early stages when 90% of cases can be prevented or treated effectively.

Colorectal cancer screening can save your life.

How do I get screened?

Talk to your health care provider about colorectal cancer screening.

To find a physician:

- Call HEALTHLink Alberta at 1-866-408-LINK (5465)
- Visit informalberta.ca
- Visit the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta website at cpsa.ab.ca

What is the screening test?

The Alberta Colorectal Cancer Screening Program recommends an annual home stool test (Fecal Occult Blood Test/FOBT) to screen for colorectal cancer. However, there are other screening tests available. Please discuss with your physician.

What is a home stool test?

A home stool test (FOBT) is a test to find blood in the stool that is not visible to the naked eye. It is done at home using test cards obtained from the lab. Small samples of stools are smeared onto the test cards which are then returned to the lab.

What happens if the home stool test is abnormal?

An abnormal home stool test result means there was blood found in the stool. **This does not necessarily mean you have cancer.** If the test is abnormal, additional testing is needed to determine the cause. An abnormal test result may be due to pre-cancerous polyps, cancer, certain diets or other conditions such as hemorrhoids.

The recommended follow-up test for an abnormal test result is a colonoscopy. During a colonoscopy, a thin flexible tube is inserted into the rectum and colon to allow the physician to examine the areas. If polyps are found, the physician will remove them to prevent them from developing into cancer. If cancer is found, the physician will discuss appropriate next steps and treatment options with you. The success rate of treating colorectal cancer found at an early stage is over 90%.

