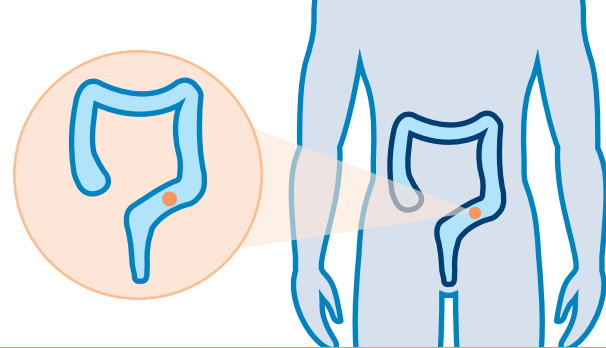


COLORECTAL CANCER SCREENING



PATIENT EDUCATION FACT SHEET



SHOULDER to SHOULDER
Every Step of the Way

Colon or rectal (colorectal) cancer is cancer in the colon or rectum and, unfortunately, is one of the most common cancers in the United States. This cancer typically starts as asymptomatic growths on the lining of the colon or rectum known as polyps. Screening is important because it can detect these polyps before they have a chance to become cancer. It also can detect cancer at an early stage when treatment can be curative.

What is colorectal cancer screening?

Colorectal screenings check for polyps in the colon or rectum. VA offers the following tests to screen for colon cancer:

- Fecal immunochemical test (FIT)
- Flexible sigmoidoscopy
- Colonoscopy

FIT screening is done at home to check for blood in stool that you can't see. Flexible sigmoidoscopy and colonoscopy involve insertion of a flexible tube with a camera through the anus into the rectum and colon to look for any abnormalities. Colonoscopy is typically performed with sedation. With colonoscopy, precancerous polyps can be removed, preventing them from developing into cancer. If either FIT or flexible sigmoidoscopy detects an abnormality, colonoscopy is necessary. **Delaying follow up on an abnormal stool test can increase your risk of cancer.**

Each year, VA diagnoses

4,000

NEW CASES of colorectal
cancer in Veterans

Who should get screened?

Adults aged 45-75 without any known increased risk of colorectal cancer should be screened with one of the following, based on a conversation with their primary care provider:

- Home-based FIT every year
- Flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years, or every 10 years with a FIT every year
- Colonoscopy every 10 years

Colonoscopy may be recommended if you have any symptoms of colorectal cancer (e.g., rectal bleeding), a personal history of polyps, or a family history of colon or rectal cancer or polyps.

What are my next steps for colorectal screening?

- ✓ Ask your doctor about your individual risk level and options for colorectal cancer screening.
- ✓ Learn more at cancer.va.gov or email cancer@va.gov
- ✓ Share this information with other Veterans. **You just might save a life.**



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