

# When to Get Screened for Colon Cancer

Screening is one of the best ways to prevent colon cancer (also known as colorectal cancer) or catch it early when it is most treatable.

Screening usually starts at age 45 and continues through at least age 75.

Common screening options include:

- A **colonoscopy** every 10 years
- A **stool-based test** every one to three years, depending on the type of test you do



## Do I Need to Start Screening Early?

Some people have an increased chance of getting colon cancer and need to start screening before age 45. If any of the following apply to you, ask your health care provider when to start screening, what test to have, and how often to get screened:

- Colon cancer or polyps in yourself or a family member
- Ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease
- An inherited syndrome such as familial adenomatous polyposis or Lynch syndrome
- Cystic fibrosis
- Treatment for any cancer before age 40

**Update your provider if anything changes.**



## What Are the Symptoms of Colon Cancer?

Screening is a way to check for a disease when you do not have any symptoms. **See your provider if you have any of these symptoms. Do not wait until your next screening.**

These symptoms do not always mean you have cancer. Your provider can help you figure out what is wrong.

- Blood in your stool (feces) or in the toilet after a bowel movement
- Stool that looks dark red or black
- Diarrhea or constipation that does not go away
- A change in the shape of your stool
- A feeling that your bowel does not empty completely
- Pain in your belly that keeps coming back or does not go away
- Loss of appetite or unexplained weight loss
- Feeling unusually tired or weak

For more information, visit [nyc.gov/health/coloncancer](https://nyc.gov/health/coloncancer).