



Colon Cancer Screening Fact Sheet

Test Type: Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT)

Anyone can get colon cancer. It can affect people of all racial and ethnic groups. Routine screening can help your health care provider find cancers earlier, when they are easier to treat. Screening may also prevent cancer, by finding and removing polyps or abnormal growths from the colon.

There are different test options for screening. Talk with your provider to choose the test that is right for you.

Who? Adults who are at average risk for colon cancer may use a FIT. Talk with your health care provider about your risk and what age to begin screening. If you are at an increased risk of colon cancer, you may need screening early or this test may not be right for you. Discuss your medical and family medical history with your provider before choosing a test. Tell them if you have any of these risk factors:

- ▶ A history of colon cancer or precancerous polyps
- ▶ A parent, sibling or child with colon cancer or precancerous polyps
- ▶ Familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP) or hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer (HNPCC), also called Lynch syndrome
- ▶ Ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease

What? FIT is a stool-based (fecal) test. A lab analysis looks for signs of blood in stool (feces).

When? This test is done once per year. If results are abnormal, you will need a follow-up colonoscopy soon after.

Where? You do this test at home.

Why? FIT detects signs of colon and rectal cancer. It can also detect some polyps, which are growths that could become cancer later.

How? You will get a kit from your provider or in the mail with instructions about how to take a sample of stool. For example, with some tests, you use the brush from the kit to brush the surface of the stool or dip the brush into the toilet water. You then touch the brush on the space indicated on the test card. You mail the test card to the lab for analysis or return the test to your provider's office. Your provider will discuss the meaning of the test results with you.

Does the Test Have Risks? This test has few risks. You may worry about the test result. Sometimes a FIT helps catch cancer early. Other times a FIT result will be abnormal, but a follow-up colonoscopy result will be normal. Discuss the risks and benefits with your provider.

Which Screening Test Is Right for You?

Differences in Colon Cancer Screening

Test Result

	Colon- oscopy	FIT*	HSgFOBT*	FIT-DNA*
Can detect colon cancer	✓	✓	✓	✓
Can prevent colon cancer	✓	*	*	*
Requires a follow-up test (colonoscopy) if results are abnormal	—	✓	✓	✓

Test Process

	Colon- oscopy	FIT*	HSgFOBT*	FIT-DNA*
You do this test at home	—	✓	✓	✓
Requires you to handle stool (feces)	—	✓	✓	✓
You do the test once a year	—	✓	✓	—
You do the test once every three years	—	—	—	✓
You do the test once every 10 years	✓	—	—	—
A health care provider does this test in a medical office or hospital	✓	—	—	—
Requires a special diet the day before	✓	—	—	—
May require diet restriction a few days before	—	—	✓	—
Usually includes anesthesia before	✓	—	—	—
Is a procedure to look inside the colon	✓	—	—	—
Includes a risk of rare complications, such as colon perforation or bleeding	✓	*	*	*
Requires an escort home	✓	—	—	—

*If this test shows abnormal results, further testing is needed by colonoscopy. If the follow-up colonoscopy detects abnormal growths or polyps, removing them can help prevent cancer.

Definitions:

FIT = fecal immunochemical test

HSgFOBT = high-sensitivity guaiac-based fecal occult blood test

FIT-DNA = multi-target stool DNA test

Where To Get a Colon Cancer Test: Talk to your health care provider to schedule a screening.

Payment: Most insurance plans, including Medicaid and Medicare, cover colon cancer screenings. However, coverage can vary. Check with your health care provider and insurer about coverage before your screening test. If you do not have insurance, you may be eligible to sign up for low- or no-cost coverage. You can call **311** to get free assistance with signing up for a plan.

New Yorkers without insurance may be eligible for low- or no-cost screening.

To learn more about colon cancer and screening options, visit nyc.gov/health and search for colon cancer.