



# Colorectal cancer screenings save lives

Making time for regular colorectal cancer screenings is an important part of protecting your health and peace of mind. That's because colorectal cancer is the third most common type of cancer among adults,<sup>1</sup> but it often doesn't show any symptoms, especially at first. Regular screenings are the best way to find colorectal cancer early, when it's easier to treat.

## What is colorectal cancer?

Colorectal cancer is when growths in the colon or rectum called polyps turn into cancer. Polyps don't always turn into cancer, and if they do, it often takes many years. That's why regular screenings are so effective — they can detect polyps when they're still harmless and easy for a doctor to remove. The survival rate for colorectal cancer is about 90% when it's caught early.<sup>2</sup>

## How can I reduce my risk for colorectal cancer?

Some factors that increase the risk of colorectal cancer are out of your control, like age, race, a family history of colorectal cancer, or having inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). However, there are several things you can do to reduce your risk of colorectal cancer and protect your whole health at the same time:

- Exercise regularly
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Eat a high-fiber, low-fat diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains
- Quit or avoid smoking
- Drink alcohol in moderation or not at all



Talk to your doctor about colorectal cancer screenings. To find a doctor near you, use the Sydney<sup>SM</sup> Health app or go to [anthem.com](https://www.anthem.com).

## When do I need colorectal cancer screenings?

Most adults should have regular colorectal cancer screenings starting at age 45.<sup>3</sup> Talk to your doctor about when you should be tested since they might recommend testing sooner and more often if you are at a higher risk for colorectal cancer.

## What should I know about colorectal cancer screenings?

There are several ways to test for colorectal cancer, but they mainly fall under these two categories:

### Colonoscopies

Colonoscopies are the most common and thorough way to screen for colorectal cancer. During the procedure, your doctor will check for and remove any polyps. It takes less than an hour, and you'll receive a sedative to help you go to sleep.

**How often you need them:** Every 10 years for people at average risk, but check with your doctor.<sup>4</sup>

### Home testing kits

These are an easier alternative to colonoscopies. You mail a sample to a lab, where they look for signs of cancer. If the lab finds anything abnormal, they may recommend a colonoscopy.

**How often you need them:** Every one to five years depending on the kit, but check with your doctor.<sup>4</sup>

#### References

- 1 American Cancer Society: *Key Statistics for Colorectal Cancer* (accessed July 2022): [cancer.org](https://www.cancer.org).
- 2 American Cancer Society: *Can Colorectal Polyps and Cancer be Found Early?* (accessed July 2022): [cancer.org](https://www.cancer.org).
- 3 American Cancer Society: *American Cancer Society Guideline for Colorectal Cancer Screening* (accessed July 2022): [cancer.org](https://www.cancer.org).
- 4 American Cancer Society: *Colorectal Cancer Screening Tests* (accessed July 2022): [cancer.org](https://www.cancer.org).

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

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