Get Tested for Colon Cancer

What is colon cancer?

Colon cancer is also called colorectal cancer. It's cancer in the **colon** or **rectum**.

Who should get screened?

Your risk for colon cancer increases with age. **It's important for everyone to start getting screened no later than age 45.** Some people need to be screened sooner if they are "high risk".

Source: U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

How do I know if I'm at "high risk"?

You are considered "high risk" if you have:

- Personal or family history of colon cancer.
- Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is a group of diseases that cause inflammation (pain and swelling) in your digestive tract. This includes Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.
- Known or suspected genetic syndrome related to colon cancer.
- Personal history of having higher risk polyps removed from your colon in the past.

What are the signs?

Some possible signs include:

- Blood in your stool
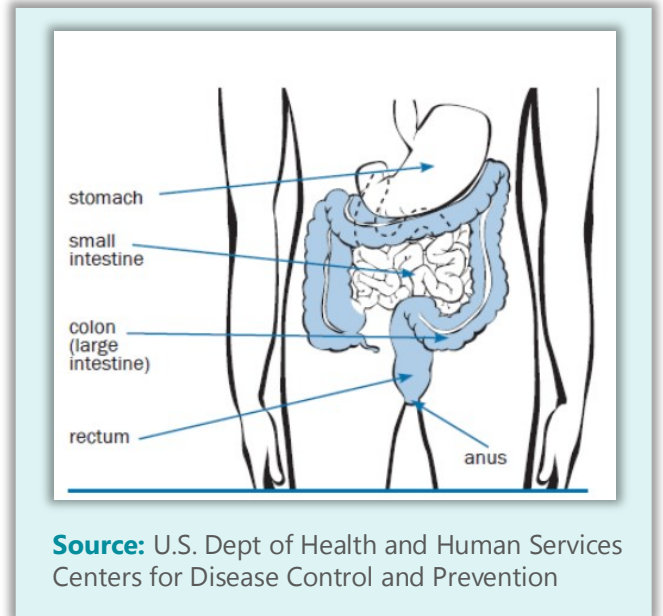- Ongoing stomach pain
- Unexplained weight loss

I feel fine and I don't have any signs. Should I still get screened?

Yes. There are often **no early signs of colon cancer**. This is why it is so important for you to get tested.

What are my options for testing?

If you are at an average risk for colon cancer, you can do an **at-home stool-based test** or a **colonoscopy.** If you are considered "high risk", you should get a **colonoscopy**.

- **Stool-based test** options include: a **FIT test done once a year** or a **FIT-DNA (Cologuard) test done every 3 years.** You can easily do these tests at home and send them back to the lab to be tested. These tests look for small amounts of blood in your stool. Blood may be a sign of cancer. If blood is found, you will need a colonoscopy.

- **A colonoscopy is a test done by a doctor.** Your doctor will use a small tube to check for cancer or polyps. Polyps are growths that may turn into cancer over time.

Talk to your CHN doctor if you have questions about getting tested!

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