

Home Screening Tests for Colorectal Cancer

Your doctor may recommend you use a home screening test to check for colorectal cancer. The results of these tests can let your doctor know if you need further testing, like a colonoscopy.

The fecal occult blood test is a simple screening test you can do at home, at the recommendation of your doctor. If recommended over other tests, it should be done once a year.

When polyps and cancers become irritated they can leak blood into the stool, but the amount of blood may be too small to see. Fecal occult blood tests detect this blood.

There are two types of fecal occult blood tests. Guaiac fecal occult blood test and fecal immunochemical test.

The guaiac fecal occult blood test is designed to find any hidden blood in the stool.

This is not just a cancer test. In addition to blood from cancer the test may also pick up blood in the stool from arthritis and pain medicines, ulcers, hemorrhoids or certain items in the diet.

To improve the accuracy of the test you should eliminate the following items from your diet for at least two days before the test and during the test. Vitamin C in excess of 250 milligrams, red meat, horseradish, radishes and other uncooked fruits and vegetables.

The fecal immunochemical test, or FIT, looks for human hemoglobin and doesn't require you to make any dietary changes beforehand. And for one week before the test you should not take aspirin or aspirin substitutes.

Both the guaiac fecal occult blood test and the FIT involve using a stool sample to get a quick reading. Call your doctor with your test results. He may want you to bring the test in or schedule an appointment.

Each kit is different. Make sure to follow the instructions for the fecal occult blood test kit you use to get an accurate reading.

Another home screening test your doctor might recommend is a stool DNA test. A stool DNA test is used to check for different changes in DNA that can appear in polyps or cancer cells. There are no special dietary changes needed before this test.

Based on the results of your home screening tests your healthcare provider may let you know that everything is clear, or want you to undergo a colonoscopy for more information.