

Common Colorectal Screening Tests

In order to check you for colorectal cancer, your doctor will recommend a screening test. These screening tests include flexible sigmoidoscopy, double contrast barium enema, and CT colonography.

Flexible sigmoidoscopy is a screening test that examines the inner lining of the rectum and the last two feet of the colon.

Your doctor will use a thin flexible tube with a light on the end to look for polyps or cancer. Although it may be uncomfortable, it is not painful and requires no anesthesia.

If polyps are found during a flexible sigmoidoscopy, your doctor can remove them but may recommend a colonoscopy to examine the rest of the colon.

Another examination of the colon lining is a double contrast barium enema. If your doctor recommends this screening test, it should be done every 5 years.

In this procedure you are given a barium enema and then air is pumped into the colon. X-Rays of the colon are taken to locate irregularities. If any polyps are found you will have a colonoscopy to remove them.

Your healthcare provider may recommend a CT colonography, also called a virtual colonoscopy. It's less invasive than a colonoscopy.

This procedure uses x-rays and imaging to create 2D or 3D pictures of the inside your colon allowing your doctor to see cancer or polyps.

CT colonography can be performed in the radiology department of your local hospital or an outpatient medical center. The procedure takes about 10 minutes to do and doesn't require you to get a sedative.

During the procedure you will lie on your back and a small tube will be inserted into your rectum. Using this tube air will be delivered into your colon allowing it to be better viewed on the x-ray.

The exam table will be moved through an x-ray scanner and a few images will be taken. You will be asked to move to your stomach, and additional x-rays will be taken. A computer will take all of the images and create the 3D picture of your colon for your doctor to review.

Your doctor will let you know what preparation is needed for your screening test. Follow their instructions to allow them to see the lining of the colon clearly, and to avoid complications.

No matter what screening test you undergo, your doctor will review your results and decide if you need further treatment.