

What is a Colonoscopy?

A colonoscopy is a test that looks at the lower gastrointestinal tract, or GI tract.

The GI tract is the system in your body that takes in food, absorbs its nutrients, and gets rid of waste.

The lower GI tract includes the colon and the rectum.

This is where polyps can form.

If left untreated, some polyps can turn into colorectal cancer.

During a colonoscopy, your healthcare provider can view your lower GI tract using a colonoscope. This thin, flexible tube has a small camera on the end of it.

Most cases of colorectal cancer can be prevented or treated if found early.

Colonoscopy plays a key role.

People at average risk should have this test at age 45.

If you are at high risk, you may need to have one earlier.

“Because of your family history of colon cancer I recommend you undergo a colonoscopy.”

Talk with your healthcare provider about your risk for colorectal cancer. Together, you can decide when it's best for you to be screened.

Your healthcare provider may also advise you have a colonoscopy: to check for and remove polyps, or if you have anemia, chronic diarrhea, blood in the stool, or inflammatory bowel disease.

Having a colonoscopy helps your healthcare provider find any problems in your GI tract, so you can get treatment if needed.