

Colon Cancer: Screening Tests and What the Results Mean

We all try to make as many healthy choices as we can.

And one very important choice you can make for yourself is to be tested, or screened, for colon cancer.

Colon cancer, which is often called colorectal cancer, occurs in the colon or rectum.

That's the lower part of your digestive system.

It happens when cells that are not normal grow in your colon or rectum.

These cancers usually start as small growths.

Over time, some of these growths can turn into cancer.

Screening tests can find problems early.

And if problems are found early, they may be easier to treat.

There are two main types of screening tests for colon cancer.

One is a stool test, which looks for blood or other signs of cancer in your stools.

This test is easy to do ... and you can do it at home.

Follow your doctor's instructions on how to do this test.

If the test finds any problems, you'll need more tests to make sure the problem isn't caused by cancer.

The other type of test lets your doctor look inside your colon.

A colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy are the most common ways your doctor can do this.

These tests can find growths that may turn into cancer.

And they may even find cancers early, when they may be easier to treat.

To do these tests, your doctor uses a lighted scope to look inside your colon.

A colonoscopy lets your doctor look at your entire colon.

A sigmoidoscopy only lets your doctor look at the lower part of your colon.

If any growths are found during the test, your doctor can remove part or all of each growth.

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It will be sent to a lab and checked for cancer.

Both types of tests can help find problems early and help save lives.

Your doctor can help you understand which tests are right for you ...

and how often you need them.

Knowing more about why a screening test is done ...

and what the results may mean ...

can help you and your doctor better understand your health.

Remember, if you have questions or concerns about the tests, just ask your doctor.