

Colorectal Cancer Screening Guide for Patients



How to Use This Guide

This guide will help you prepare for a colorectal cancer screening and ask for accommodations.

To best identify the accommodations you need, please use this guide together with **Health Care Accommodations: My Checklist**.

The **Colorectal Cancer Screening Guide** focuses only on accommodations needed for colorectal cancer screening. **Health Care Accommodations: My Checklist** has other accommodations considerations like interpreters, accessible tables, or communication support.



Note: This guide uses the word *doctor*, but you may see a different type of health care professional, like a nurse practitioner or physician assistant. The information in this guide also applies to them.



**Health Care
Accommodations:
My Checklist**
Visit bit.ly/3HatJoy
Scan QR code at left

Getting Started

Best time to start:

One to two weeks before your appointment.

You can complete this guide:

On your own or with a trusted support person.

How to fill it out:

- Print it out and write in your answers
- Fill it out electronically and save or print it out



Instructions

1. Complete the **Health Care Accommodations: My Checklist**.
2. **Read** about different ways to get screened for colorectal cancer.
3. **Select** any accommodations you need.
4. **Write questions** you have for your doctor, insurance company, and local resources for this screening.
5. **Finalize** your colorectal cancer screening plan.

Tips for Success

- **Take breaks.** Complete this guide one section at a time.
- **Focus on what matters most.** You do not have to answer every question.
- **Ask for help** if you need it.
- **Bring your completed Health Care Accommodations Checklist and this guide** to your appointment and share with your health care team.

What to Expect



What is Colorectal Cancer?

A type of cancer that happens when cells in the colon (large intestine) grow out of control. It is important to get screened to see if there are signs of cancer before you feel sick. It is easier to treat the earlier it is found.

Who Needs This Screening?

- Adults beginning at age 45 who feel healthy and do not have any signs of colon issues. You should keep getting screened until age 75, or as long as your doctor says it is right for you.
- Some people may have different screening recommendations than in this guide. **Follow the schedule you and your doctor discuss.**

What is Bowel Prep?

Some colorectal cancer screenings need your colon to be clean and empty so the doctor can clearly see inside. This is called bowel prep (bowel preparation).

For bowel prep, you drink a special liquid or take a series of pills that make you go to the bathroom many times. You may also need to only drink clear liquids for a day or two before your screening. Not all screenings need bowel prep; the stool-based screening (poop test) does not require any bowel prep.

Your Screening Options

There are four types of colorectal cancer screening. **Choose the one that you are most comfortable with.** They are listed below from most invasive to least invasive. Invasive means how much the screening affects your body.

The more invasive screenings go inside your body and need more preparation, but you have to do them less often. The less invasive screenings are easier on your body and can be done at home, but you need to do them more often to stay protected from cancer.

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Colonoscopy Looks inside your colon	Sigmoidoscopy Looks inside part of your colon	Colonography CT scan of your colon	Stool-based Screening At-home poop test

Option 1: Screening that Looks Inside Your Colon (Colonoscopy)

Who is this option for?

- People ages 45–75
- People who want the most complete screening and do not mind prep work
- People who prefer more time between screenings

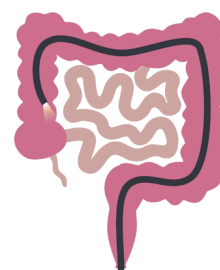
What happens during the screening?

1. One to two days before:

- Drink a special liquid or take a series of pills
- You will go to the bathroom many times.

2. On screening day:

- Go to the doctor's office or hospital
- The doctor puts a thin, flexible tube with a small camera into your colon through your anus (the opening where poop comes out) to look around
- You usually get medicine to help you sleep during the screening
- The screening takes about 30 to 60 minutes



Colonoscopy

How often would I need this type of screening?

If the results of your colonoscopy are normal, then you only need this screening **every 10 years**.

Option 2: Screening that Looks at Part of Your Colon (Sigmoidoscopy)

Who is this option for?

- People ages 45–75
- People who want a shorter screening that looks at part of the colon.
 - Less prep work is needed for this screening

What happens during the screening?

This is like a colonoscopy, but the doctor only looks at the lower part of your colon. You still need some prep, but less than for a colonoscopy. You usually do not need medicine to sleep.



Sigmoidoscopy

How often would I need this type of screening?

If the results on your sigmoidoscopy are normal, you would be screened again:

- every five years, or
- every 10 years if you take a stool-based screening every year (see Option 4: Stool-Based Screenings)

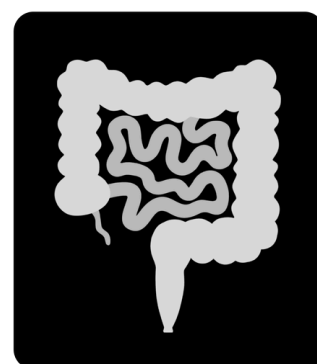
Option 3: CT Colonography (CT Scan of Colon)

Who is this option for?

- People ages 45–75
- People who cannot have a regular colonoscopy
- People who want a screening that uses X-rays instead of a camera tube

What happens during the screening?

1. You do prep work like a colonoscopy to clean out your colon.
2. At the hospital, air is put into your colon to make it bigger for better pictures.
3. You lie on a table that slides into a CT scanner.
4. The X-ray machine takes pictures of your colon.
5. The screening takes about 15 minutes.



Colonography Image

How often would I need this type of screening?

If the results on your colonography are normal, then you need this screening **every five years**.

Option 4: Stool-based Screening (also called FIT test or 'poop test')

Who is this option for?

- People ages 45–75
- People who want to do a screening at home
- People who have trouble getting to the bathroom quickly and often
- People who want to avoid prep work and procedures

What happens during the screening?

1. Your doctor gives you a test kit.
2. At home, collect a small amount of your poop (also called 'stool') in the container.
3. Send it to a lab in the mail.
4. The lab checks for blood or bad cells that might mean cancer.
5. Receive results in a few days.



Stool Sample

How often would I need this type of screening?

If your stool-based screening results are normal, then you may have to take it again every year, or in some cases every three years. Talk to your doctor to find out more.

Accommodations You Can Ask For

Doctors must help and support your needs within reason. This is called **reasonable accommodations**. A doctor may not be able to provide every accommodation you ask for.

If they cannot accommodate you, then they should talk with you about other options for getting the care you need.

On the next page is a list of accommodations you may need for your colorectal cancer screening.



Accommodations for Colorectal Cancer Screening

Instructions:

Check the box next to each accommodation you may need.
Bring this checklist to your appointment.

At Home:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Video instructions for bowel prep
<input type="checkbox"/>	Step-by-step bowel prep instructions in plain language with pictures
<input type="checkbox"/>	A list of foods I can eat for the week leading up to the procedure
<input type="checkbox"/>	A list of bowel prep items I need that can be purchased at one store
<input type="checkbox"/>	Phone calls or messages to remind me about bowel prep tasks in the days before the colonoscopy

Colonoscopy Facility (If you are getting a colonoscopy)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Planned hospitalization for bowel prep
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During the Procedure:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Height-adjustable exam table
<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff explains each step as it is happening so I know what to expect

Other Accommodations I Need:

<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	

Questions to Ask



Questions for My Doctor's Office:

Ask the receptionist these questions when you call to schedule your appointment or call any time before your visit.

“I have a list of accommodations that would support me during my colorectal cancer screening. Can you review this list and tell me which ones your office can provide?”

Other questions for my doctor's office:

Questions to Ask



Questions for My Doctor:

“What other screening options are there if a colonoscopy cannot be accessible to me?”

“Would a stool-based screening (poop test) or CT colonography (CT scan) be appropriate for me?”

☐

Stool-based screening (poop test)

☐

CT colonography (CT scan)

“Are there any risks with this screening option?”

“How often do I need to get my colorectal cancer screening?”

“What should I expect if my screening results are not normal? ”

Other questions for my doctor:



Questions to Ask Insurance:

Call the number on your insurance card or visit your insurance online portal (if available).

“I have a disability and may not be able to do bowel prep at home. Will my insurance plan cover a planned hospitalization for bowel prep as part of the screening?”

Check the box with the answer they give you.

☐

Yes, it is covered if ‘medically necessary’.

This means your doctor must state that it is needed for your health.

☐

Yes, but ‘prior authorization’ is required.

This means your doctor must ask the insurance company first and get approval.

☐

No, it is not covered.

☐

Other: _____

Other questions for insurance:



Questions to Ask About Local Resources

To find accessible screening locations, contact your local health department, disability organizations (call 211), search www.findhelp.org, or ask your doctor's office.

“Which health care facilities near me have colonoscopy equipment that is accessible to me?”

“Are there mobile screening clinics that might be more accessible to me?”

Other questions about local resources:

My Plan for Colorectal Cancer Screening

Type of screening I will get:

- ☐ Colonoscopy
- ☐ Sigmoidoscopy (screening that looks at part of my colon)
- ☐ CT colonography (CT scan)
- ☐ Other: _____

My Appointment



Date of my appointment:

Time of my appointment:



Location of my appointment:

Address:

Directions to the office:

Accessible parking or drop-off location:

Accessible entrance and elevator location:

Screening for All



**Making preventive health screenings
accessible for everyone.**

More resources available at
mcd.org/screening-for-all



Screening For All is an initiative funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (NCBDDD) to address the significant barriers people with disabilities face in accessing preventive health screenings.

Developed by MCD Global Health, this project provides patients and health care practitioners with evidence-based tools and resources to make preventive health screenings accessible to all patients. Questions or comments can be sent to info@mcd.org.

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