



Cancer Prevention and Care – Screening Tests

Screening means checking your body for cancer before you have symptoms. Getting screening tests regularly may find breast, cervical, and colorectal (colon) cancers early, when treatment is likely to work best. Lung cancer screening is recommended for some individuals who are at high risk. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention supports screening for colorectal (colon), lung, breast, and cervical cancers as recommended by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. Screening for ovarian, pancreatic, prostate, testicular, and thyroid cancers has not been shown to reduce deaths from those cancers.

Colorectal (Colon) Cancer

- Colorectal cancer almost always develops from precancerous polyps (abnormal growths) in the colon or rectum. Screening tests can find precancerous polyps, so they can be removed before they turn into cancer. Screening tests also can find colorectal cancer early, when treatment works best.
- The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommends several colorectal cancer screening strategies, including stool tests, flexible sigmoidoscopy, colonoscopy, and CT colonography (virtual colonoscopy).
- You should begin screening for colorectal cancer soon after turning 50, then continue getting screened at regular intervals. However, you may need to be tested earlier than 50, or more often than other individuals, if:
 - You or a close relative have had colorectal polyps or colorectal cancer.
 - You have an inflammatory bowel disease such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis.
 - You have a genetic syndrome such as familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP) or hereditary non-polyposis colorectal cancer (Lynch syndrome).

Lung Cancer

- Lung cancer is the leading cause of death from cancer in the United States. Most people who develop lung cancer (more than 80 percent) get it from smoking. If you currently smoke, the best way to lower your risk of developing lung cancer is to quit.
- The only recommended screening test for lung cancer is low-dose computed tomography (also called a low-dose CT scan, or LDCT). In this test, an X-ray machine scans the body and uses low doses of radiation to make detailed pictures of the lungs.
- The USPSTF recommends yearly lung cancer screening with LDCT for people who:
 - Have a history of heavy smoking*, and
 - Smoke now or have quit within the past 15 years, and
 - Are between 55 and 80 years old.

* Heavy smoking means a smoking history of 30 pack years or more. A *pack year* is smoking an average of one pack of cigarettes per day for one year. For example, a person could have a 30 pack-year history by smoking one pack a day for 30 years or two packs a day for 15 years.

Prevention and Screening



Breast Cancer

- Mammograms are the best way to find breast cancer early—when it is easier to treat.
- The USPSTF recommends women who are 50 to 74 years old and at average risk for breast cancer get a mammogram every two years. Women who are 40 to 49 years old should talk to their health care provider about when to start and how often to get a mammogram.
- Women should weigh the benefits and risks of screening tests when deciding whether to begin getting mammograms before age 50.

Cervical Cancer

- Two screening tests can help prevent cervical cancer or find it early—the Pap test and the HPV test.
- The Pap test can find abnormal cells in the cervix which may turn into cancer. The HPV test looks for the virus (human papillomavirus) that can cause these cell changes. Pap tests also can find cervical cancer early—when the chance of being cured is very high.
- Women should start getting Pap tests at age 21. If your Pap test result is normal, your doctor may tell you that you can wait three years until your next Pap test.
- For women ages 30 to 65, talk to your health care provider about which testing option is right for you:
 - A Pap test only – If your result is normal, your doctor may tell you that you can wait three years until your next Pap test.
 - An HPV test only – This is called primary HPV testing. If your result is normal, your doctor may tell you that you can wait five years until your next screening test.
 - An HPV test along with the Pap test – This is called co-testing. If both of your results are normal, your doctor may tell you that you can wait five years until your next screening test.
- For women older than 65, your doctor may tell you that you don't need to be screened anymore if:
 - You have had normal screening test results for several years.
 - You have had your cervix removed as part of a total hysterectomy for non-cancerous conditions, like fibroids.