



Honouring the First Nations path of well-being

What is cancer screening?

Cancer screening means taking a test that can find cancer early, before you have any symptoms. When cancer is caught early it is easier to treat. Getting screened regularly can help lead to healthier and happier lives for you, your family, and your community.

What is the ColonCancerCheck program?

ColonCancerCheck is a screening program in Ontario that encourages men and women ages 50 to 74 to screen for colon cancer. ColonCancerCheck sends letters to eligible men and women ages 50 to 74 to get screened for colon cancer. These letters provide information on how to get screened.

There are different ways to screen for colon cancer.

You are eligible to get screened for colon cancer if you are at:

1. Average risk

A person is at average risk if they are 50 to 74 years old with no first-degree relative (parent, brother, sister, child) who has been diagnosed with colon cancer. People at average risk should get screened with the fecal immunochemical test (FIT) every two years.

2. Increased risk

A person is at increased risk if they have a family history of colon cancer that includes one or more first-degree relatives with the disease. People at increased risk should get screened with a colonoscopy. People at increased risk should start screening at age 50, or 10 years earlier than the age their relative was diagnosed with colon cancer, whichever comes first.

What is the fecal immunochemical test (FIT)?

- FIT is a safe and painless test that can be done at home.
- FIT checks your stool (poop) for tiny drops of blood that can be caused by colon cancer or pre-cancerous polyps (growths that can turn into cancer over time).
- Your healthcare provider will tell you how to complete the test.

What happens after I complete my FIT?

- Both you and your healthcare provider will receive the results of the test.
- If your result is normal, you will receive a reminder letter from ColonCancerCheck to be screened again in two years.
- If your result is abnormal, it means there is blood in your stool. This does not always mean you have cancer. You will need to follow up with a colonoscopy to find out.
- Your healthcare provider will arrange for you to have a colonoscopy.

What is a colonoscopy?

- A colonoscopy is an exam in which a doctor looks at the lining of the entire colon using a long, flexible tube with a tiny camera on the end.
- During the colonoscopy, the doctor can also take biopsies (samples of tissues) or remove polyps.

What happens after my colonoscopy appointment?

- You will get your colonoscopy results before you leave the hospital or clinic from the doctor who did your colonoscopy. Your family doctor or nurse practitioner will also get a copy of your results.
- If you had a normal colonoscopy, your healthcare provider or specialist will let you know when you need to be screened for colon cancer again.
- If you had an abnormal colonoscopy, your healthcare provider or specialist will talk to you about next steps, which may include getting more tests or treatments.

It is important to talk to your healthcare provider about what screening test is right for you. If you do not have a healthcare provider, you can still get screened! **Call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-828-9213 for more information.** If you live on a First Nation reserve, you can contact your health centre or nursing station.

What is colon cancer? Does it affect us?

Colon cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in Ontario. Colon cancer is a type of cancer that develops in the colon and rectum (also known as the large intestine or large bowel). Most colon cancers start as small growths (polyps).

If colon cancer is found and treated early, there is a 90% chance it can be cured. We know that the number of First Nations men and women diagnosed with colon cancer has dramatically increased.

The path to wellness

A healthy lifestyle may reduce your chance of getting colon cancer, as well as many other diseases. Here are some simple things you can do:

- Maintain a healthy body weight
- Be physically active
- Eat a healthy diet
- Be smoke free
- Limit alcohol
- Be sun safe
- Get screened for colon cancer using FIT

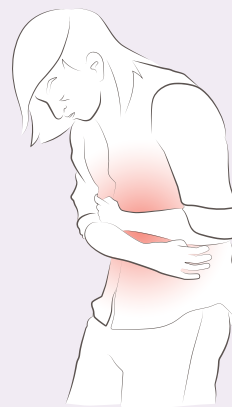
SYMPTOMS AND ISSUES

Colon cancer develops over time. Many people do not know that they have colon cancer because they do not feel anything. Please see your healthcare provider as soon as possible if any of the following problems occur:



Blood (either very dark or bright red) in the stool

New and persistent diarrhea, constipation or feeling that your bowel does not empty all the way



New and persistent stomach discomfort

You are losing weight and do not know why

Unexplained anemia (drop in red blood cell count) that is caused by low iron

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It is easy to get screened! Talk to your healthcare provider about what screening test is right for you.

For more information, please visit:

cancercareontario.ca/colon
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