



# Colon Screening for Inuit

## What is colon cancer?

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). Colon cancer is the third most common cancer among Inuit in Inuit Nunangat.<sup>1</sup>

## What is cancer screening?

Cancer screening is testing done on people who have a chance of getting cancer but have no symptoms and generally feel fine. Getting screened regularly can help lead to healthier and happier lives for you, your family and your community. 9 out of 10 people can be cured if colon cancer is caught early.<sup>2</sup>

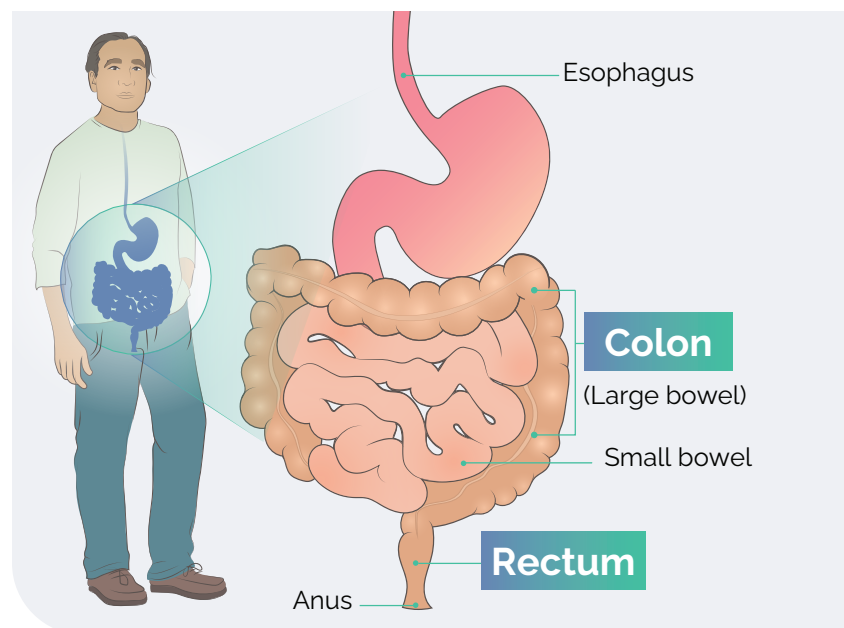
ColonCancerCheck is a program that encourages people to get checked and reduce their chances of dying from colon cancer. The ColonCancerCheck program checks two different groups of people: those at average risk and those at increased risk. If you are between the ages of 50 to 74 without a parent, sibling or child who has been diagnosed with colon cancer, you are at average risk. If you have a parent, sibling or child who has been diagnosed with colon cancer, you are at increased risk.

## Screening people at average risk

If you are at average risk of getting colon cancer and have no symptoms, it is recommended that you get checked with the fecal immunochemical test (FIT) every two years.

## Screening people at increased risk

If you are at increased risk of getting colon cancer and have no symptoms, it is recommended that you get checked with 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.



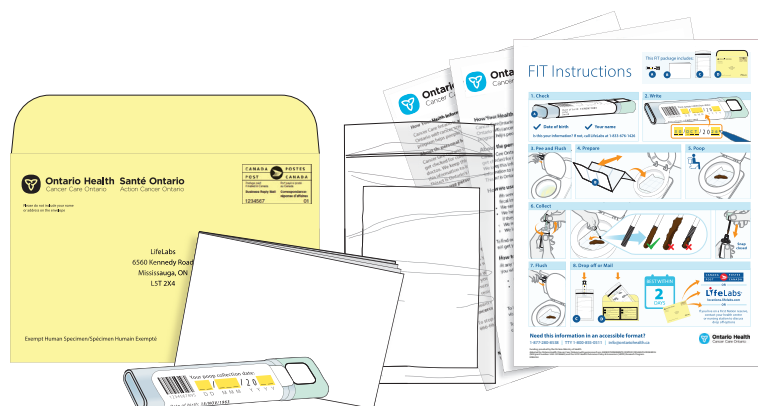
**Ontario Health**  
Cancer Care Ontario

## What is the 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).

## What happens after I complete my FIT?

Both you and your health care 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.



## What happens after my colonoscopy appointment?

The doctor doing the colonoscopy will tell you your test result and next steps.

## How do I get a FIT or a colonoscopy?

Average risk participants can order a FIT kit through their health care provider, mobile screening coach, health centre or nursing station. Average risk participants without a health care provider can order a FIT kit by contacting Health811.

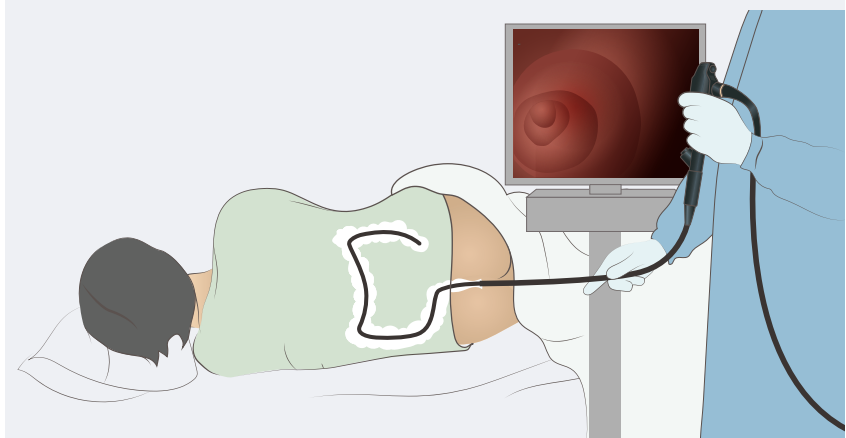
Increased risk participants should talk to their health care provider about cancer screening options. To find Indigenous primary health care organizations, visit [Indigenous Primary Health Care Council](#) or [Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario](#)

For more information on colon cancer screening, please visit: [cancercareontario.ca/colon](https://cancercareontario.ca/colon)



## 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 (small growths that form inside the colon or rectum). A colonoscopy is safe, and it usually takes less than thirty minutes.



1 Carrière GM, Tjepkema M, Pennock J, Goedhuis N. Cancer patterns in Inuit Nunangat: 1998–2007. *Int J Circumpolar Health*. 2012 May 15;71:18581.

2 Cancer Care Ontario. Ontario Cancer Statistics 2022 Report. Toronto, ON: Cancer Care Ontario; 2022.

Production of this resource has been made possible through collaboration and financial support from the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer Corporation and Health Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada or the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer.

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EIH-224250