Deciding on a
Colorectal Cancer Screening Test

Colonoscopy, FIT-Fecal DNA or FIT Test?

Colorectal cancer is one of the few cancers that can actually be **prevented** through proper screening.

A colonoscopy remains the gold standard of screening tools for this type of cancer because it can find precancerous polyps and remove them at the same time. Colorectal cancer has a 90% survival rate when found and treated early, according to the American Cancer Society.

Colonoscopy is unique in that it actually prevents most colon cancers from ever occurring.

Some hospitals and doctors are recommending less invasive colon cancer screening tests such as the Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) or FIT-Fecal DNA Test (Cologuard®) to start with – even if you haven't declined or considered a colonoscopy. You may have even seen commercials for some of these options on TV.

While these tests are better than no screening at all, there are major differences – from outcomes to cost – to consider.

Let's take a look at the options.

Three screening tests are common in use for colorectal cancer. They've been ranked by the U.S. Multi-Society Task Force of Colorectal Cancer.

The Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) is a tier 1 at-home screening. It looks for blood in stool samples from a bleeding tumor and detects about 70% of colon cancers and about 30% of large colorectal polyps. Because it is not as effective as colonoscopy for detecting cancer, it should be performed annually. FIT has a false positive rate of about 5%, which again, needs to be followed up with a colonoscopy.

The tier 2 test, the FIT-Fecal DNA Test, is designed to detect microscopic blood as well as abnormal DNA in stool samples. While it's an at-home test, it is expensive (and not always just in terms of cost). Both false positives and false negatives do occur. This test fails to detect 8% of cancers and 60% of large polyps that are at higher risk for becoming colon cancer. Patients may be reassured by a negative test when they actually have colorectal cancer or precancerous polyps that could have been detected removed through a colonoscopy.

Additionally, follow-up colonoscopies reveal that almost half of positive FIT-Fecal DNA tests are false positive tests. Colonoscopy for a positive FIT-fecal DNA test is considered part of the continuum of care for colon cancer screening. There is no out-of-pocket cost for the colonoscopy.

Colonoscopy is still the best screening test for colon cancer. Not only is it best at detecting colon cancer, it can also prevent cancer because it allows doctors to remove any precancerous polyps during the test.

Which test is right for you?

Colon cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the U.S. Nearly 1 in 3 adults nationally are not getting screened as recommended.

Talk to your gastroenterologist today to determine what screening test is right for you!

COLONOSCOPY

ASGE | THE Cancer *Prevention* Screening Test