

Ready to start planning your care? Call us at [800-525-2225](tel:800-525-2225) to make an appointment.

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Memorial Sloan Kettering
Cancer Center

[Make an Appointment](#)

[Back](#)

[Colon Cancer](#) [Rectal Cancer](#) [Diagnosis & Treatment](#)

[Refer a Patient](#)

ABOUT US

[Our mission, vision & core values](#)

[Leadership](#)

[History](#)

[Equality, diversity & inclusion](#)

[Annual report](#)

[Give to MSK](#)

Colorectal cancer starts when healthy cells in your colon or rectum change and grow. They form a mass called a tumor. Colorectal cancer includes cancers found in the colon or rectum. Read more about [colon](#) and [rectal](#) cancer.

What are the Screening Tests for Colorectal Cancer?

There are many types of colorectal cancer screening tests. Colonoscopy is the only test that can both find and remove small growths on the colon's inner lining. These growths in the colon or rectum are called polyps. They are not cancer, but can become cancer. This means that a colonoscopy can both find and prevent colon cancer. [Learn more about screening tests for colorectal cancer](#).

What is My Risk for Colorectal Cancer?

Knowing your risk for getting colorectal cancer will help you decide when screening is right for you. A risk factor is anything that increases your chance of getting a disease, such as cancer.

Average Risk

You are at average risk if you are 45 or older and have:

No symptoms.

Never had colorectal cancer. Your close family members related to you by blood (parents, siblings, or children) have never had the disease.

Never had polyps (growths that are not cancer but can become cancer) in your colon or rectum.

Never had inflammatory bowel disease, such as ulcerative colitis or Crohn's colitis.

Higher Risk

You are at higher risk if you:

Have close family members related to you by blood (parents, siblings, or children) who had colorectal cancer.

Have had polyps (growths that are not cancer but can become cancer) in your colon or rectum.

Have certain changes (mutations or variants) in your genes, such as Lynch Syndrome or familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP). These conditions are rare causes of colon cancer that are hereditary (it runs in your family).

Your race can also play a role in your risk for getting colorectal cancer. For example, in the United States, colorectal cancers affect the Black community at a higher rate than any other race.

MSK's Screening Guideline for Colorectal Cancer

These are MSK's latest guidelines for colorectal cancer. They may be different from those of other groups of experts. The type of screening you have and your screening schedule are based on your personal risk for colorectal cancer.

MSK recommends that people at average risk for colorectal cancer start getting screened at age 45.

MSK recommends that people at higher risk for colorectal cancer talk with their healthcare provider about when to start screening.

If you are 75 or older, talk with your healthcare provider about whether screening is right for you. Routine screening is not generally recommended after age 85.

Request an Appointment

Call [800-525-2225](tel:800-525-2225)

Available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. (Eastern time)

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