

### What is colorectal cancer screening?

Colorectal cancer screening is a series of tests that look for signs of cancer or precancerous polyps in the colon and rectum, often before any symptoms appear. It is recommended that all individuals at average risk begin colon and rectal cancer screening at age 45.

### Why is this screening important?

It allows for early detection which significantly increases the chances of successful treatment and survival. It can also identify and remove polyps, preventing them from developing into cancer.

### Colorectal Cancer Screening Options

- **Colonoscopy** – allows a doctor to visualize the entire colon and rectum and remove polyps or collect tissue samples for biopsy during the same procedure. It requires bowel preparation and sedation. Colonoscopies are the **gold standard** and is typically recommended every 10 years for average-risk individuals.
- **Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT)** – an at-home test that detects hidden blood in the stool which can be an early sign of colorectal cancer or precancerous polyps. One FIT test should be performed every year, and a colonoscopy is recommended if the test result is positive.
- **Stool DNA Test (Cologuard)** – detects the presence of cancer or precancerous polyps through the analysis of DNA in stool samples. A stool DNA test is valid for 3 years, and a colonoscopy is recommended if the test result is positive.
  - UCare partners with Exact Sciences to offer Cologuard to members. Refer to [Cologuard FAQ](#) for more information.
- **CT Colonography (virtual colonoscopy)** – uses CT scans to create 3D image of the colon and rectum to detect polyps. It is a less invasive option than a colonoscopy but may miss smaller polyps. One is typically recommended every 5 years.
- **Sigmoidoscopy** – examines the rectum and lower part of the colon using a thin, flexible tube called a sigmoidoscope. It is typically recommended every 5 years, and a positive result will also require a colonoscopy.

### What to Expect During a Colonoscopy

1. Bowel preparation is needed before the procedure. This consists of a special diet including taking laxatives to clear the colon of stool.
2. Sedation will be administered through an IV to help with relaxation to minimize discomfort during the procedure.
3. The doctor will insert the colonoscope into the rectum and carefully navigate it through the colon. The colonoscope may inflate the colon with air or carbon dioxide to improve visibility. The camera on the colonoscope will allow the doctor to view the lining of the colon and rectum for abnormalities.
4. Polyps or other abnormalities are removed or biopsied if detected.

This entire process typically takes 30-60 minutes.

### Results and Follow-Up

- **Negative Colonoscopy** – Indicates no polyps or other abnormalities were found in the colon. If there are no other risk factors, another colonoscopy may not be needed for 10 years.

- **Positive Colonoscopy** – Indicates the presence of polyps or other abnormal tissue in the colon. Follow-up may include:
  - Polyp removal
  - Additional testing such as biopsy
  - More frequent screening
- If the colon cancer screening is normal or follow-up tests did not reveal the presence of colon cancer, continue screening at the recommended frequency.

UCare does not require a referral from a PCP for colorectal cancer screening.

### Benefit Coverage

Colorectal cancer screenings - are covered by UCare under preventive services which incurs no out of pocket cost. Members should contact UCare for questions about out-of-pocket costs for a follow-up screening. Costs vary by plan.

Cologuard – is covered by UCare under preventive services, which incurs no out of pocket cost. Members should contact UCare for questions about out-of-pocket costs for a follow-up screening. Costs vary by plan.

### UCare Incentives

Colonoscopy Screening – Incentives vary by plan. For more details, please refer to:

- <https://www.ucare.org/health-wellness/rewards-incentives>

Cologuard – Incentives vary by plan. For More details, please refer to:

- [Rewards for Minnesota Senior Health Options \(MSHO\) Members | UCare](#)
- [Rewards for UCare Connect + Medicare Members | UCare](#)