

Regular doctor visits can help spot colon cancer

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(HealthDay)—Making regular visits to a primary care doctor increases

the odds you'll be screened for colon cancer, a new study says.

Colon cancer is the third most common cancer and the second leading cause of cancer death in the United States. But [colon cancer screening](#) is underused, the study authors said.

"These findings help underscore the continued importance and effectiveness of visits with [primary care physicians](#) in a brave new world of virtual care and population health outreach," said study co-author Dr. Ethan Halm.

He is director of the UT Southwestern Center for Patient-Centered Outcomes Research in Dallas.

The study researchers analyzed data from more than 968,000 Americans, aged 50 to 74, in four [health systems](#) across the country.

Those who saw a [primary care](#) doctor at least once a year were twice as likely to be screened for colon cancer. And they were 30 percent more likely to have a follow-up colonoscopy, compared with those who did not make regular visits to a primary care doctor, the researchers found.

This was true even among patients in health systems that heavily promote mail-in home stool blood tests that don't require a doctor visit.

"This result is important because screening for [colon cancer](#) can result in an early diagnosis and improved survival," Halm said in a university news release.

The study was published recently in the *Journal of General Internal Medicine*.

More information: The U.S. National Cancer Institute has more on

[colon cancer screening](#).

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