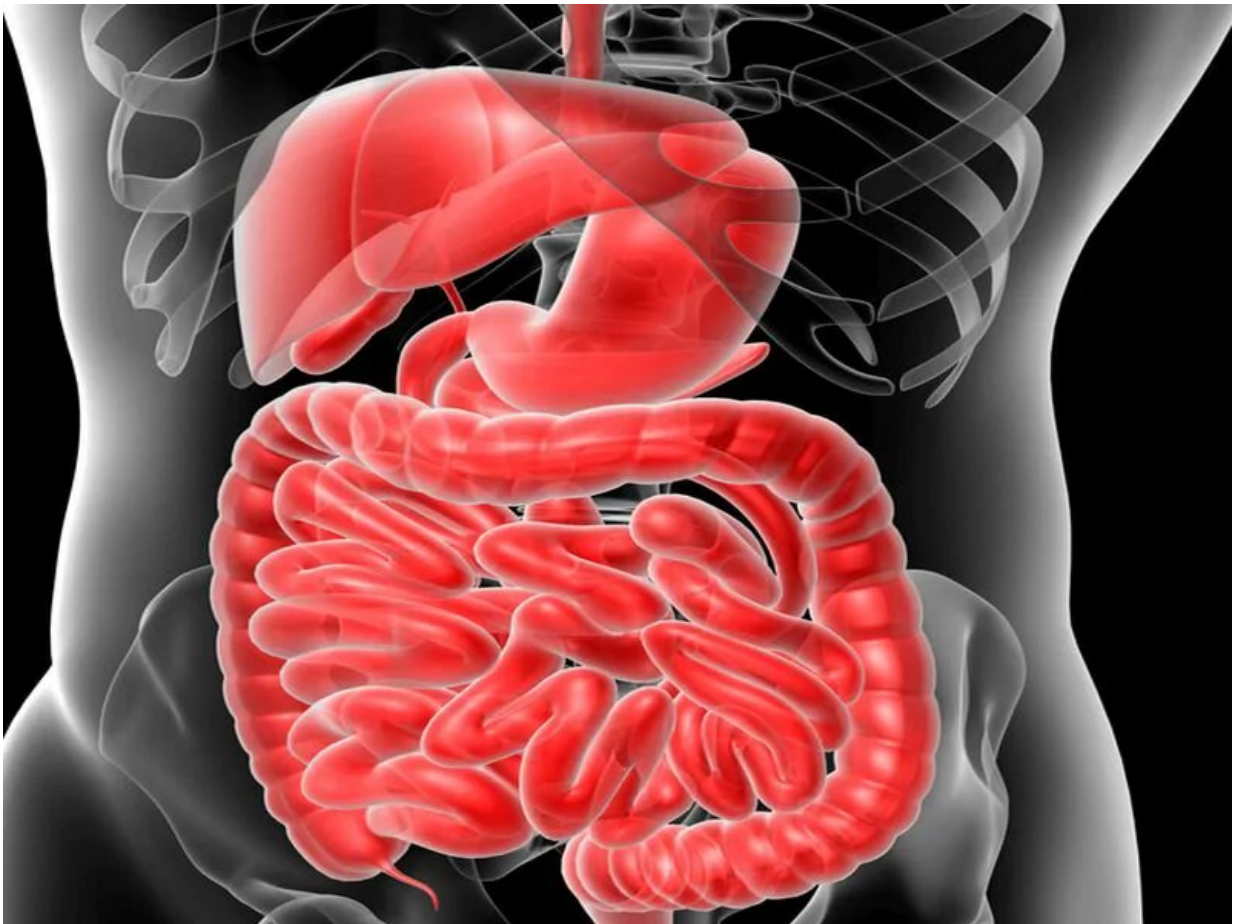


# Choose the right colon cancer screening option

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(HealthDay)—Colon cancer is highly preventable through regular

screening. But the right type of screening depends on your particular risk factors, an expert says.

Each year in the United States, more than 140,000 people are diagnosed with [colon cancer](#), and about 50,000 die from the disease. It's the second-leading cause of cancer death in the country.

"With [colorectal cancer screening](#), we can detect [precancerous lesions](#) and get them removed," said Dr. Kofi Clarke, chief of gastroenterology at Penn State Medical Center.

"We've begun to notice the incidence of colorectal cancer decreasing in the past few years, and we believe that is partly due to screening," Clarke said in a center news release.

Most people at average risk should start getting screened at age 50, but [black people](#) should start screening at age 45, Clarke said.

Average risk means there is no family or personal history of polyps, colon cancer or [inflammatory bowel disease](#) (IBD), and no history of abdominal radiation as a child or radiation treatment for [prostate cancer](#).

Screening options for people at average risk include colonoscopy, virtual colonoscopy, and fecal tests.

Colonoscopy—the gold standard—is recommended every 10 years. It allows doctors to view the inside of the colon and remove any polyps or abnormal findings for further testing. A less invasive option is virtual colonoscopy, a CT scan of the colon. It should be done once every five years.

"But if the test detects polyps, you will still need a colonoscopy to have them examined," Clarke said.

Other options include stool DNA tests, which should be done once every three years. Fecal tests that check for blood in the stool are recommended once a year.

People at high risk for colon cancer should have a colonoscopy once every five years and preferably should not use the other screening options, Clarke advised.

"For those with a family history of colorectal cancer, we recommend they start screenings at either age 40 or five years before their family member was diagnosed," Clarke said. People with IBD should begin screening after eight years with the condition.

If you're uncertain about your colon cancer risk level, talk with your doctor.

**More information:** The U.S. National Cancer Institute has more on [colon cancer screening](#).

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