

Who should be screened for colorectal cancer?

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Colorectal cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer death in the U.S. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force and the Multi-Society Task Force on colon cancer encourage patients to start screening at age 50 unless they have other risk factors like family history or inflammatory diseases that could predispose them to colon cancer. However, African

Americans may consider getting screened at an earlier age. Dr. John Kisiel, a Mayo Clinic gastroenterologist, explains who is at risk.

Men are more likely than women to get [colorectal cancer](#) and there are other high-risk groups, says Mayo Clinic's Dr. John Kisiel.

"African Americans are often diagnosed with either more advanced disease or may have more aggressive disease when they are diagnosed, and that's matched stage for stage."

Dr. Kisiel says patients should start screening at age 50, but adds there is more encouragement for African Americans to maybe start screening at age 45. Other [risk factors](#) may include [family history](#), inherited syndromes, obesity, diabetes, smoking, diet and age. "It is a condition that is most commonly diagnosed around age 67, but the risk continues to advance with age."

Dr. Kisiel advocates for regular screening. He says if the disease is diagnosed early, it is highly treatable. If it's diagnosed later, it's less likely curable. "Colon cancer has been called the most fatal, yet most preventable, disease."

For those uncomfortable with a colonoscopy or a stool-based test, Dr. Kisiel offers this: "Colon cancer can kill you. Embarrassment will not."

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