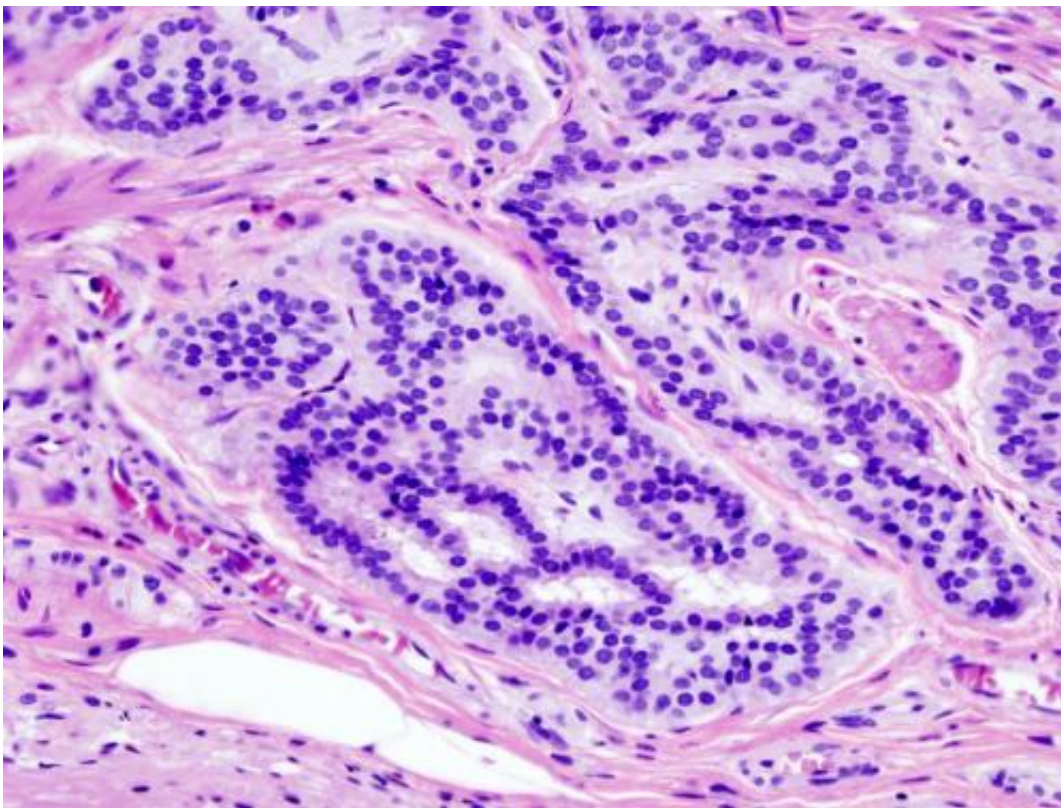


# Flexible sigmoidoscopy screening associated with long-term reduction in colorectal cancer incidence and mortality

November 9 2021

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Cancer—Histopathologic image of colonic carcinoid. Credit: Wikipedia/CC BY-SA 3.0

A parallel randomized controlled trial confirmed that a single flexible sigmoidoscopy screening at age 55 to 64 years represents a safe and

effective strategy associated with a substantial reduction in colorectal cancer (CRC) incidence and mortality. The strong protective effect was maintained up to 15 years and 19 years, respectively. The findings are published in *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Large, randomized trials of flexible [sigmoidoscopy screening](#) had shown a substantial reduction in CRC incidence (range, 18% to 26%) and mortality (range, 22% to 31%) after a median follow-up of 10 to 12 years in the intention-to-treat analysis. The recent reports of the extended incidence and mortality follow-up from three of those trials showed that the screening effect was maintained up to 15 to 17 years. Additional data about the duration of the protection conferred by a single sigmoidoscopy screening and about differences of screening effect by sex and age could offer useful insight to support evidence-based recommendations about screening intervals as well as about alternative strategies aimed to achieve a larger protective effect.

Researchers from University Hospital Città della Salute e della Scienza, Turin, Italy, randomly assigned 34,272 persons aged 55 to 64 at 6 centers in Italy to receive either a once-only flexible sigmoidoscopy screening or usual care ([control group](#)). Compared to the control group, [colorectal cancer](#) incidence was 19% lower at 15 years and CRC mortality was 22% lower 19 at years, respectively, after a single screening sigmoidoscopy. Consistent with previous estimates on the basis of the 11-year follow-up, more than 80% of averted deaths are attributable to the prevention of incident CRC via adenoma removal at screening. These findings confirm the strong preventive effect of flexible sigmoidoscopy screening.

**More information: Study:**

[www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M21-0977](http://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M21-0977)

**Editorial:** [www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M21-3770](http://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M21-3770)

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