

What you need to know about preventing colon cancer.

What is the colon?

The colon is the part of the body's digestive system. It moves waste material from the small intestine to the rectum.

Together the colon and the rectum make up the large intestine (bowel).

The small intestine absorbs most of the nutrients from what you eat and then passes on the leftover waste to the colon. The colon absorbs water from the waste. What is left is called stool (feces or poop). When you have a bowel movement, the stool leaves the rectum through the anus.

What is colon cancer?

Colon cancer, also known as colorectal or bowel cancer, originates from small growths (polyps) in the colon or rectum. You can have these growths for several years without having symptoms. Most polyps do not become cancerous. However certain polyps can turn into cancer if they are not removed.

Am I at risk?

Some factors that increase your risk of colon cancer are:

- **Age over 50:** Over 90% of colon cancer cases occur in people over the age of 50.
- **Strong family history:** One first degree relative (parent, sibling, or child) or two second degree family members (aunt, uncle, grandparent) who had colon cancer or pre-cancerous polyps.
- **Personal medical history:** A personal history of polyps, ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease, or colon cancer.
- **Genetic changes:** Alterations that cause rare inherited conditions such as familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP) or Lynch syndrome.
- **Lifestyle choices:** Smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, and eating red and processed meats.
- **Body weight:** Excess body fat and, in particular, belly fat.

The best prevention for colon cancer is **REGULAR SCREENING**



Colon cancer is one of the most **COMMONLY DIAGNOSED CANCERS** in Manitoba



MANITOBANS OVER THE AGE OF 50 are at a higher risk of colon cancer

There are often **NO EARLY WARNING SYMPTOMS** of colon cancer



9 OUT OF 10 TIMES colon cancer can be cured if caught early

What can I do to lower my risk?

1 Live a healthy lifestyle



Eat foods high in fibre.



Get regular physical activity.



Limit the amount of alcohol you drink.



Be smoke-free.



Limit the amount of red meat and processed meat you eat.

There is probable evidence to suggest that a diet high in garlic, milk and calcium can decrease the risk of colon cancer.

2 Get Checked

Why should I get checked?

Screening and follow-up tests can prevent colon cancer by finding and removing polyps before they turn into cancer. Screening can also find cancer early when treatment may work better.

What is ColonCheck?

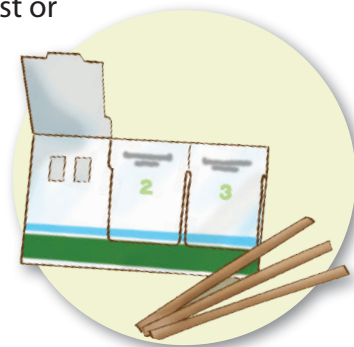
ColonCheck is a program of CancerCare Manitoba, funded by Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living. The goal of our program is to prevent colon cancer or find it early when treatment may work better. We invite eligible people 50 to 74 years of age to be screened by mailing home screening tests to their residences. ColonCheck partners with healthcare providers to ensure that individuals with abnormal screening results get the follow-up care they need.

Who should get checked?

Most people age 50-74 should do a home screening test every two years. If you have not done a test like this in the past two years, or have not had a colonoscopy in the past five years, then you should get checked.

What is the home screening test?

The home screening test is a simple test that you do in your own bathroom. It is also called a fecal occult blood test or FOBT. It is a test that looks for hidden blood in the stool (poop) which can be a sign of polyps or early stage cancer.



The home screening test is not for people who have:

- Symptoms of colon cancer such as: visible blood in their stool, abdominal pain, a change in bowel habits lasting more than a few weeks, or unexplained weight loss.
- Ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease.
- A previous diagnosis of pre-cancerous polyps or colon cancer.
- A strong family history of colon cancer.
- Had a colonoscopy within the past five years.

Some people have specific needs that require individualized care from a healthcare provider. They may need colon cancer screening before age 50 or they may need a colonoscopy. Talk to your healthcare provider if any of the above applies to you.

How do I get checked?

Contact us to find out when you are due for screening.

Tests can be requested by:

- Filling out a form online at cancercare.mb.ca/screening
- Calling ColonCheck at 1-855-95-CHECK, or
- Talking to your healthcare provider.

Things to consider

- Regular screening offers the best chance of detecting the early signs of cancer, but no screening test is perfect.
- Screening may lead to follow-up tests. An abnormal test result simply means that blood was found in the stool. It does not mean that cancer has been found as screening finds many non-cancerous polyps as well.

What is a colonoscopy?

A colonoscopy allows the doctor to examine the inside of your colon (bowel) and rectum. A long flexible tube (colonoscope) with a small camera is passed into your rectum and colon. On a video monitor, the doctor looks for any abnormal areas on the lining of your colon. There can be risks with this procedure. Rarely some people may have bleeding or other complications such as a perforation (tear) in the colon that may require a hospital stay.




What happens after I do the home screening test?

After you've returned it by following the instructions provided with the test, ColonCheck will receive a result from the lab.

Additional tests are needed to determine where the blood is coming from.

In most cases, a colonoscopy will be the recommended follow up test to an abnormal test result.



RESULT	WHAT IT MEANS	COLONCHECK WILL
Normal	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ No blood was found in your stool sample. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Send you and your healthcare provider a result letter. ▶ Send you a test in 2 years if you are still eligible to be screened at that time.
Abnormal	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Blood was found in your stool sample. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Contact you by phone to let you know your result and discuss your referral for colonoscopy. ▶ Send your healthcare provider a copy of your test result and coordinate the referral for colonoscopy.
Unsatisfactory	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The lab was not able to provide a result. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Send you a new test and a letter explaining the reason for the result.