

FOBT (fecal occult blood test) vs Colonoscopy

What is FOBT?

FOBT (fecal occult blood test) is a fecal-based colorectal cancer screening option that allows patients to produce samples in the comfort of their own homes, at their convenience. These tests are useful to screen for colon cancer, because tissue or polyps with cancer are more likely to bleed than normal colon tissue. If bleeding is found, a colonoscopy will be done to find the cause. Since colorectal cancers do not bleed all the time the tests are done over several days on different stool samples. This increases the chance of finding blood in your stool if it exists.

Blood in the stool may be the only symptom of colorectal cancer, but not all blood in the stool is caused by cancer. Other conditions that can cause blood in the stool include: Hemorrhoids, Anal fissures, Colon polyps, Peptic ulcers, inflammatory bowel disease, GERD, and/or Crohn's disease.

What is a Colonoscopy?

A Colonoscopy is an outpatient procedure in which your large bowel (colon and rectum) is examined. In a colonoscopy, a tiny camera is used to examine the colon and rectum. If polyps are found, they can be removed during this procedure. It may also be used to evaluate many other problems, including:

- Long term, unexplained pain
- Anemia (low red blood cells)
- Blood in the stool
- Change in bowel habits
- Unexplained weight loss

What are the recommendations?

The CDC recommends that everyone over 50 begin having a colonoscopy at age 50 at intervals of 10 years. Your provider may recommend you start your screening earlier if you have a 1st degree relative with colon cancer or a personal history of inflammatory bowel disease.

How Do I Know Which Screening Test Is Right for Me?

There is no single "best test" for any person. Each test has advantages and disadvantages. Talk to your health care provider about the pros and cons of each test, and how often to be treated. Which test to use will depend on your personal preference, your family history, and your medical condition.