

Comparison of Colorectal Screening Tests

Test	Features	Limitations
Colonoscopy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Procedure takes about 30 minutes ▪ Can usually view entire colon ▪ Full bowel preparation needed ▪ Sedation of some kind usually needed ▪ Can biopsy and remove polyps ▪ Can diagnose other diseases ▪ Done every 10 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can miss small polyps ▪ More expensive on a one-time basis than other forms of testing ▪ Will need someone to drive you home ▪ You may miss a day of work ▪ Small risk of bleeding, bowel tears, or infection
Flexible Sigmoidoscopy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Procedure takes 10-20 minutes ▪ Fairly safe ▪ Usually doesn't require full bowel preparation ▪ Sedation usually not used ▪ Does not require a specialist ▪ Done every five years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Views only about a third of the colon ▪ Can miss small polyps ▪ Can't remove all polyps ▪ May be some discomfort ▪ Very small risk of bleeding, infection, or bowel tear ▪ Colonoscopy will be needed if abnormal
CT Colonography (Virtual Colonoscopy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Procedure takes about 10 minutes ▪ Fairly safe ▪ Full bowel preparation needed ▪ No sedation needed ▪ Can usually view entire colon ▪ Done every five years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can miss small polyps ▪ Some false positive test results ▪ Cannot remove polyps during testing ▪ Colonoscopy will be needed if abnormal ▪ Still fairly new
Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No direct risk to the colon ▪ No bowel preparation ▪ No pre-test dietary restrictions ▪ Sampling done at home ▪ Fairly inexpensive ▪ Should be done annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ May miss many polyps and some cancers ▪ May produce false-positive test results ▪ Colonoscopy will be needed if abnormal
Fecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No direct risk to the colon ▪ No bowel preparation ▪ Sampling done at home ▪ Inexpensive ▪ Should be done annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ May miss many polyps and some cancers ▪ May produce false-positive test results ▪ May have pre-test dietary limitations ▪ Colonoscopy will be needed if abnormal