



BlueCross BlueShield of Illinois

WELLNESS  CAN'T WAIT



## Why Should I Get Tested for Colon Cancer?



## Wellness Can't Wait

- ☒ Get oil changed
- ☒ Clean the refrigerator
- ☐ **Get tested for colon cancer**

**Some things should be checked first.**

No one likes to talk about colon cancer. And that's okay, as long as you take action. After all, colon cancer is the third leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States. Your **Wellness Can't Wait**. If you're 45 years of age or older, take steps to protect yourself.



## BESIDES SKIN CANCER, COLON CANCER IS THE THIRD MOST COMMONLY DIAGNOSED CANCER FOR BOTH MEN AND WOMEN IN THE U.S.

Besides skin cancer, colon cancer is the third most commonly diagnosed cancer for both men and women in the U.S. It is the third cause of cancer death. For certain minorities, these numbers are even more staggering – it is the second leading cause of cancer death among Latino men. Meanwhile, African Americans are the least likely to be diagnosed early and have the highest death rate of all ethnic groups in the U.S.

While you may be one of the millions of Americans who choose to wait until they are sick to visit a doctor (or avoid going at all), there are countless reasons why you should make regular check-ups a habit.

### “I feel fine.”

If the reason you've not visited a doctor is because you feel healthy, it's still important to visit your doctor before feeling unwell. Like many other forms of cancer, colon cancer usually has no symptoms in its early stage. The good news is, when caught early, there's a 90% survival rate.

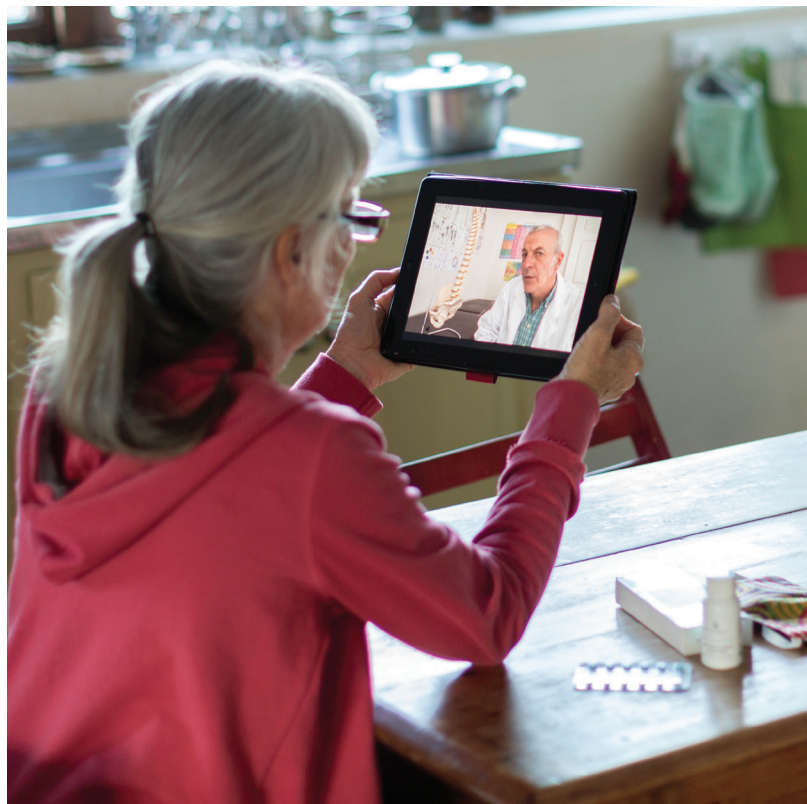
Unfortunately, one in three adults in the U.S. is not getting screened. If you are among those who have not yet been screened, talk to your doctor about what tests may be right for you. This is especially true if you are age 45 or older or have one of these risk factors:

### Risk factors for Colon cancer

- **Ethnicity:** People who are of Ashkenazi Jewish, African American, Alaska Native or American Indian descent have an increased risk.
- **Personal or family history of any of the following:** Inflammatory bowel disease, colon cancer, colon polyps, familial adenomatous polyposis, or Lynch syndrome can increase your risk.
- **Diet:** Eating a lot of red and processed meats and few fruits and vegetables can increase your risk of colon cancer.
- **Lifestyle:** Obesity, physical inactivity, smoking and heavy alcohol use can increase your risk of colon cancer.

### “But I’m worried about getting a colonoscopy.”

Of course, some people avoid seeing the doctor because they think screenings are unpleasant. If this is why you haven't yet visited, understand that there are multiple ways to screen for colon cancer—one of which you can do



in your very own home. Others are less invasive than a colonoscopy and can be done similar to an x-ray. Talk with your doctor about your options. Before your visit, take a look at the following colon cancer tests, recommended by the American Cancer Society and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- **Colonoscopy:** With this direct exam of the colon and rectum, your doctor can biopsy and remove polyps—small growths that usually cause colon cancer.
- **Fecal Occult Blood Test/Fecal Immunochemical Test:** For this test, your doctor will give you an at-home kit, which you can perform by yourself.
- **Flexible sigmoidoscopy:** This fairly quick, safe test can be done at your primary care physician's office and does not require sedation.

Now that you know the importance of getting screened, what tests are available, and what's covered, it's time to call your doctor and schedule a visit. He or she can help you decide how best to get screened. There's no better time than now!