

NEW SCREENING TEST FOR COLORECTAL CANCER



BLOOD TEST TO DETECT COLORECTAL CANCER

In the United States, colorectal cancer (CRC) is the third most common cancer in both men and women, yet it is one of the most preventable types of cancer. The American Cancer Society estimates that more than 150,000 people will be diagnosed with CRC in 2024, and the disease will be responsible for more than 53,000 deaths. Early detection could prevent more than 90% of colorectal cancer-related deaths. Until now, we have had two different types of tests: colonoscopy and stool tests. In July 2024, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved a new blood-based test for colorectal cancer screening.

What's NEW?

The FDA approved Guardant Health's Shield™ blood test as a screening test for colorectal cancer in average risk adults. The test detects DNA fragments shed by tumor cells and precancerous growths in the blood. **Similar to all stool tests, a positive Shield™ result will need to be followed by colonoscopy to evaluate for cancer and pre-cancerous polyps.**

What's the EVIDENCE?

The approval was based on a study that enrolled nearly 8,000 men and women age 45 and older from across the U.S. The test's ability to correctly identify those with colorectal cancer is 83%. The test's ability to correctly identify those without colorectal cancer or advanced precancerous growths is 90%. This means that the Shield test may fail to detect 1 in 6 cancers. By comparison, studies have estimated that colonoscopy fails to detect 1 in 60 cancers.

When to USE the test?

This blood test is intended for average-risk individuals aged 45 or older, **not for high-risk individuals**. Stool-based tests are recommended every 1-3 years, and this blood-based test is recommended every 3 years. Remember: screening via colonoscopy is recommended every 10 years.

What's the difference between a blood test vs. a COLONOSCOPY?

The blood test is not an equivalent alternative to colonoscopy. A positive blood test needs to be followed by diagnostic colonoscopy (a 2-step process). Colonoscopy (a 1-step process) not only can detect cancer but also can remove precancerous polyps, and, therefore, can prevent colorectal cancer.

What do the test RESULTS mean?

A positive Shield™ test result indicates the possibility of colon and rectal cancer or advanced precancerous growths, and you should proceed with a colonoscopy. It's important to remember that false positives and negatives can occur. Patients with a negative result should expect to be get a screened again in 3 years.

What are the BENEFITS of the test?

Some patients may not care to do a stool test or colonoscopy due to inconvenience, preparation requirements, and/or concerns about risk of colonoscopy. Blood tests might lead to increased screening rates due to ease and convenience.

Is this test covered by INSURANCE?

The Shield™ test is covered every three years for eligible Medicare beneficiaries. To check if your insurance plan covers the test, please contact your healthcare provider.

TALK TO YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER TODAY ABOUT
WHICH SCREENING TEST FOR COLORECTAL CANCER IS RIGHT FOR YOU!

Reference: *N Engl J Med.* 2024 Mar 14;390(11):973-983

LEARN MORE: [GI.ORG/COLONCANCER](https://gi.org/coloncancer)

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