

Beyond Colonoscopies – 3 Tests to Catch Colorectal Cancer

March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. According to the American Cancer Society, [nearly 150,000 people](#) in the United States are diagnosed with this disease each year. It is one of the most common cancers – but also highly curable when caught early.

It has never been easier to screen for colorectal cancer. In fact, there are three different tests readily available – including two non-invasive tests. A fear of tubes, scopes or fasting is no longer an excuse to avoid a potentially life-saving screening. Be smart – here are a look at your three options:

- **Fecal immunochemical testing (FIT)** uses antibodies to detect blood in the stool. It's done once a year and doesn't require fasting or restricting your diet. You receive a test kit from your healthcare provider, and – from the convenience of your own home – you use a stick or brush to obtain a small amount of stool. You then mail the test kit to the lab (they provide a pre-addressed mailer), where the stool sample is checked for the presence of blood.
- **FIT-DNA testing** combines FIT with a test that detects altered DNA in the stool. For this home test, you collect stool and send it to a lab in a prepackaged container. This test requires zero prep and no dietary or drug restrictions. It is done once every three years.
- **Screening colonoscopies** are visual exams of the entire colon, using a thin and flexible lighted tube to check for polyps or cancer inside the rectum and the entire colon. During the test, the doctor can find and remove most polyps and some cancers. You only need one every 10 years.

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 doctor about the pros and cons of each, and how often to be tested. Picking the right test depends on:

- your preferences
- your medical condition
- the likelihood you will get the test
- the resources available for testing and follow-up

Most of our plans cover all three of these tests once you turn 50, and there are even multiple types of colonoscopies to choose from. Talk to your doctor, and log into YourHealthAlliance.org for your most current list of covered benefits. You can also call the number on the back of your ID card. If the screening is considered preventive, most of our plans cover 100 percent of the costs.*

Colorectal cancer is an enemy you can fight. Let us be your ally in detecting early warning signs – talk to your doctor and set up a screening today.

Want to learn more about health, wellness, preventive services and disease management? Visit HealthAlliance.org/Health.

**Diagnostic services or additional testing may be subject to coinsurance, copays or deductible based on your plan's benefits. These additional benefits may not be included in short-term, limited-duration policies. See your plan materials for complete details.*