

FACTS ABOUT COLORECTAL CANCER: **Screening Saves Lives**

FACTS

MAINE COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CONTROL PROGRAM

Colorectal cancer can be prevented by removing precancerous polyps or growths, which can be present in the colon for years before invasive cancer develops.

Having regular screening tests, beginning at age 50, could save your life. Screening tests can find colorectal cancer early, when treatment works best and the chance for a full recovery is very high.

Four tests are recommended for colorectal cancer screening:

The **fecal occult blood test (FOBT)**, which checks for hidden blood in three consecutive stool samples.

In **flexible sigmoidoscopy** exams, physicians use a flexible, lighted tube (sigmoidoscope) to visually inspect the interior walls of the rectum and part of the colon.

In **colonoscopy** exams, physicians use a flexible, lighted tube (colonoscope), which is longer than the sigmoidoscope, to visually inspect the interior walls of the rectum and the entire colon. During this procedure, samples of tissue may be collected for closer examination or polyps may be removed. Colonoscopies can be used as screening tests or as follow-up diagnostic tools when the results of another screening test are positive.

The **double-contrast barium enema** test comprises a series of X-rays of the colon and rectum, which are taken after the patient is given an enema containing barium dye followed by an injection of air in the lower bowel.

Several scientific organizations recommend regular screening for all adults aged 50 years or older. Recommended screening tests and intervals are as follows:

- FOBT every year, or
- Flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years, or
- Double-contrast barium enema every 5 years, or
- Colonoscopy every 10 years.



An Initiative of the
Maine Comprehensive Cancer Control Program
Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Bureau of Health

For more information about colorectal cancer,
call **1-877-320-6800**
TTY: 1-800-438-5514 (Deaf/Hard of Hearing)
or visit www.mainepublichealth.gov.



John Elias Baldacci
Governor

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