



## HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

# When Should People Get a Colon Cancer Exam?

October 30, 2020

A group of health experts wants adults to start getting tested for **colon** cancer at age 45. That is five years younger than the age it formerly **recommended** for colon cancer screenings.

Screening is a medical term. It means the act of doing a test on a person to look for evidence of a disease or health problem.

In the United States, colon cancer rates have been falling in recent years. But the recent screening proposal, released by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, shows that experts are concerned about rising colon cancer rates in people under the age of 50.

Alex Krist is a family doctor at Virginia Commonwealth University and a member of the Preventive Services Task Force. He spoke to The Associated Press.

“We’ve seen more **data** showing that younger people are getting colon cancer at higher rates,” Krist said. “Basically, a 45-year-old today has the same risk of getting colon cancer as a 50-year-old from years past.”

The Preventive Services Task Force is a volunteer group of doctors. They study evidence and offer recommendations about medical tests and treatments.

The group is suggesting that adults of average risk for colon cancer be screened from ages 45 to 75. How often the tests are done depends on the kind of screening.

A careful examination of the colon – known as a colonoscopy -- is usually done every five to 10 years. Other exams, such as **stool**-based tests, can be performed every year.

“Most people who get colon cancer have no signs, no **symptoms** and no risks. And so that’s why we recommend that everyone get screened,” Krist said.

The task force suggestion on screening is not for people who have colon cancer, **polyps** or a family history of colon cancer or genetic disorders. All of those conditions can increase their risk.

Colon cancer, along with rectal cancer, is the third leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States. There will be an estimated 148,000 new cases nationwide this year.

The Task Force’s suggestions are now the same as those from the American Cancer Society. In 2018, the American Cancer Society lowered the screening age from 50 to 45. With the change, doctors should feel at ease recommending colon cancer screens to younger patients, said the cancer group’s Robert Smith.

Earlier testing would help identify polyps or early cancer in younger patients before the disease requires more aggressive treatment, said Doctor Nancy You. She works at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston.

“We have a lot more treatment **options** that are less **invasive** and have better results when we treat cancer at the earlier stages,” You said. “That makes a huge difference to our patients.”

Experts believe it will still be difficult to screen people for colon cancer. Currently, 1 in 4 people between 50 and 75 have never been tested for the disease. Only about 60 percent of U.S. adults are up to date on their colon cancer screenings, Krist said.

I'm John Russell.

*Marion Renault reported this story for VOA Learning English. John Russell adapted it for VOA Learning English. George Grow was the editor.*

---

## Words in This Story

**colon** - *n.* the main part of the large intestine

**recommend** – *v.* to suggest that someone do (something)

**data** – *n.* facts and other information collected for use in studies

**stool** – *n.* waste product

**symptom** – *n.* a sign or marker of something

**polyp** -- *n. medical* : a small mass of a substance that grows inside your body (such as inside your colon or on your vocal cords)

**option** – *n.* choice

**invasive** – *adj. medical* : involving entry into the body by cutting or by loading or adding an instrument

*We want to hear from you. Write to us in the Comments Section.*

---