

6 Questions That Could Save Your Life (or the life of someone you love): What Women Need to Know about Colon Cancer Screening

March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month and the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE) encourages everyone over 50, or those under 50 with a family history or other risk factors, to be screened for colorectal cancer.

Test Your Knowledge About Colorectal Cancer (CRC) Screening

If you think the answer is true or mostly true, answer true. If you think the answer is false or mostly false, answer false. Answers appear below.

1. Colorectal cancer is predominantly a "man's disease", affecting many more men than women annually.
2. Only women over the age of 50 who are currently experiencing some symptoms or problems should be screened for colorectal cancer or polyps.
3. A colonoscopy-screening exam typically requires an overnight stay in a hospital.
4. Colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of cancer deaths in women in the United States.
5. Tests used for screening for colon cancer include digital rectal exam, stool blood test, barium enema, flexible sigmoidoscopy, and colonoscopy.
6. Colon cancer is often preventable.

Answers

1. **False -**
Colorectal cancer affects an equal number of men and women. Many women, however, think of CRC as a disease only affecting men and may be unaware of important information about screening and preventing colorectal cancer (CRC) that could save their lives, says the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy.
2. **False -**
beginning at age 50, all men and women should be screened for colorectal cancer *EVEN IF THEY ARE EXPERIENCING NO PROBLEMS OR SYMPTOMS.*
3. **False -**
Colonoscopy is almost always done on an outpatient basis. A mild sedative is usually given before the procedure and then a flexible, slender tube is inserted into the rectum to look inside the colon. The test is safe and the procedure itself typically takes less than 30 minutes.
4. **True -**
After lung cancer and breast cancer, colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of cancer deaths in women in the United States. Annually, approximately 130,000 new cases of colorectal cancer are diagnosed in the United States and 56,000 people die from the disease. It has been estimated that increased awareness and screening could save 30,000 lives each year.
5. **True -**
These are the 5 different tests used for screening for colorectal cancer even before there are symptoms. Talk to your healthcare provider about which test is best for you. Current recommendations for screening* include:
 - o Beginning at age 50, men and women should have, at a minimum:
 - o An annual stool occult blood test
 - o Flexible sigmoidoscopy every three to five years, or a colonoscopy every ten years
 - o A digital rectal exam at the time of each screening sigmoidoscopy, colonoscopy, or barium enema

- ***Important:** You should begin screening earlier if you have a personal or family history of colorectal cancer, polyps, rectal bleeding or long-standing inflammatory bowel disease such as ulcerative colitis.
6. **True -**
Colorectal cancer is highly preventable. Screening tests such as colonoscopy and flexible sigmoidoscopy may detect polyps (small, grape like growths on the lining of the colon). Removal of these polyps can prevent colorectal cancer from developing.

The American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy encourages you to talk with your healthcare provider about colon cancer screening and encourages everyone over the age of 50 to undergo the appropriate CRC screening.

If your primary healthcare provider has recommended one of the common CRC screening methods of flexible sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy, you can find a physician with specialized training in these GI endoscopic procedures by using the free Find an Endoscopist tool on the ASGE's web site at <http://www.asge.org/>. For a free information pamphlet on "Understanding Colonoscopy" or "Choosing an ASGE Member for Your Screening Procedure," visit the Patient Information section of the ASGE web site at <http://www.asge.org/>.

The **American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE)**, founded in 1941, is the preeminent professional organization dedicated to advancing the practice of endoscopy. ASGE promotes the highest standards of endoscopic training and practice, fosters endoscopic research, recognizes distinguished contributions to endoscopy, and is the foremost resource for endoscopic education. ASGE, with over 7750 members worldwide, serves the profession and the public by developing and advocating responsible positions for the benefit of patients, the public and medical professionals. ASGE publishes the leading peer-reviewed endoscopic journal Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (GIE).

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