

## Colon Cancer Awareness

### Getting screened could save your life

Colon cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death among men and women in the US and is estimated over half of all colon cancer deaths could be prevented, if people got tested regularly. There's no better time to learn the facts about colon cancer and get tested.



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If you are 50 or older, you should speak with your doctor about colon cancer screening. Screening can find colon cancer before symptoms develop when it's easier to treat and survival rates are better. Screening can help find growths called polyps that can be removed before they turn into cancer. The good news is that fewer people have been dying from colon cancer over the past few decades. That's due to improvements in screening.

Several screening tests have been developed to help find colorectal cancer early, when it is more treatable. Medical experts recommend that people over 50 years get screened at regular intervals with one of the following tests: high-sensitivity fecal occult blood tests (FOBT), or stool DNA testing, or standard colonoscopy, or virtual colonoscopy. People at increased risk because of a family history of colorectal cancer or polyps or because they have inflammatory bowel disease, may be advised to start screening before age 50 and/or have more frequent screening. In this article we review tests using standard colonoscopy and virtual colonoscopy.

### Standard colonoscopy

In this test, the rectum and entire colon are examined using a colonoscope, a flexible lighted tube with a lens for viewing and a tool for removing tissue. The tube is inserted through the anus into the rectum and the colon as air is pumped into the colon to expand it so the doctor can see the colon lining more clearly. During a colonoscopy, any abnormal growths in the colon and the rectum can be removed. A thorough cleansing of the entire colon is necessary before this test and patients receive some form of sedation during the test. Studies show that colonoscopy reduces deaths from colorectal cancer by about 60 to 70 percent. Colonoscopy is recommended every 10 years for people at average risk as long as their test results are negative.

### Virtual colonoscopy

This screening test, also called computed tomographic [CT] colonography uses a CT scanner to produce a series of pictures of the colon and the rectum from outside the body. A computer then assembles these pictures into detailed images that can show polyps

and other abnormalities. Virtual colonoscopy is a newer method of screening the colon and is less invasive than standard colonoscopy and does not require sedation, providing a proven screening test for individuals who cannot, or will not have a colonoscopy. As with standard colonoscopy, a thorough cleansing of the colon is necessary before



this test, and air is pumped into the colon to expand it for better viewing of the colon's lining. The accuracy of virtual colonoscopy is similar to that of standard colonoscopy, and virtual colonoscopy has a lower risk of complications. However, if polyps or other abnormal growths are found during a

virtual colonoscopy, a standard colonoscopy is usually performed to remove them. With the combination of newer and faster CT scanners with computer software that can produce images equivalent to an endoscope, virtual colonoscopy seems to be a logical choice in the screening for colon cancer. During the CT scan, the doctors will, if requested, check for the symptoms of prostate cancer at no extra cost.

We use the SOMATON SCOPE, the latest and fastest CT scanner in Los Cabos, which is highly suitable for virtual colonoscopy screening. The Somaton Scope delivers outstanding image quality and is capable to reduce radiation dose up to 40% while maintaining high levels of quality, and diagnosis confidence. The scan time takes approximately 20 seconds, with very low radiation during which time the patient holds his or her breath. After the exam, there are two methods that can be used to deal with a polyp that has been identified by the CT scan. If the patient desires to have a same day standard colonoscopy when a polyp is identified, he or she waits for approximately 45 - 60 minutes in order to confirm if a polyp has been identified. This time is needed to carefully examine the colon using computer images. If a polyp is identified, the patient then has a standard colonoscopy performed to remove the polyp. If no polyp is found, the patient goes home.

To learn more about colon cancer screening tests, arrange a consultation to review your present condition, and we will discuss the best options for you. The virtual colonoscopy normally costs \$550 US and a standard colonoscopy **\$850 US**. Contact us now for more details- there's no better time to learn the facts about colon cancer and get tested.

## Other screening tests

**PRMEDICA** can arrange other screening tests including tests for prostate cancer, mammography and general health check-ups using the latest equipment and technology. Contact us for more information.