

Colorectal cancer is the 2nd most common cancer in both sexes - one in 20 individuals will develop the disease in his or her lifetime. However, it is also one of the most preventable cancers. Thus, regular screening is important, especially for those at risk.

Get Screened To Prevent



Colorectal Cancer

Who is at risk?

The risk of colorectal cancer increases with age. More than 85% of colorectal cancers occur in individuals over the age of 50. Those with a personal history of breast, uterine (womb) or ovarian cancer and a family history of polyps or colorectal cancer face a higher risk and the likelihood of developing colorectal cancer at an earlier age.

Screening for colorectal cancer

A majority of colon and rectal cancers begin from a non-cancerous (benign) growth called a polyp. Removal of polyps will prevent colorectal cancers in most cases. Undergoing appropriate screening for early detection is the key to preventing colorectal cancer.

For average-risk men and women who have none of the above-mentioned risk factors, screening should begin at the age of 50.

Method of screening	Screening interval
Test for blood in the stool	Repeated every year, if results are normal. If tested positive for blood in the stool, colonoscopy is recommended.
Barium enema (x-ray examination of colon and rectum)	Repeated every 5 to 10 years, if results are normal.
Colonoscopy (examination of the large intestine with a colonoscope)	Repeated every 10 years, if results are normal.

For men and women in the high-risk group, colonoscopy screening should be done every 5 years.

Risk Factors	Colonoscopy screening intervals
A family history of colorectal cancer before the age of 50.	Colonoscopy screening should begin at the age of 40, or 5 years younger than the age of the affected family member at the time of diagnosis, whichever is earlier. If polyps are found and removed, colonoscopy should be repeated every 1 to 3 years. If the colonoscopy results are normal, it should be repeated every 3 to 5 years.
Women who have a history of cancer of the breast, womb or ovary.	Colonoscopy screening, starting at the age of 40, should be repeated every 3 to 5 years.

Consult your doctor if you are unsure of your risk factors. For more information on colorectal cancer or for an appointment, please call the NUH Colorectal Clinic at 6772 2230.