What is a family health history?
A family health history is a portrait of the shared lives and health of your extended family.

Screening recommendations

... for individuals WITH NO KNOWN FAMILY HISTORY of colorectal cancer

Screening for colorectal cancer should start at age 50 for most people. Several screening tests are recommended:

- Yearly fecal occult blood test (FOT) or fecal immunochemical test (FIT)
- Flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years
- Double-contrast barium enema every five years
- Colonoscopy every 10 years
- Individuals with inflammatory bowel disease, personal history of curative intent resected colorectal cancer, ovarian cancer, endometrial cancer, or adenoma(s) found at colonoscopy should be screened more frequently

... for individuals WITH A FAMILY HISTORY of colorectal cancer

Individuals with a first-degree relative (brother, sister, parent, child) or two or more second degree relatives (grandparents, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, half-brothers, half-sisters) with a history of colorectal cancer should be screened with colonoscopy when they are 40 years of age or ten years younger than their relative was at the time of diagnosis, whichever is younger.
Colorectal cancer risk factors and what you can do about them

Things you can change

- **Obesity**: Greater weight leads to greater risk
- **Diet**: A diet high in fat, meat, and processed grains increases risk
- **Exercise**: An inactive lifestyle increases risk
- **Smoking**: Smoking increases risk
- **Alcohol intake**: Drinking too much alcohol increases risk

Things you can't change

- **Family history**: People who have a family history of colorectal cancer, especially if the relatives are affected before the age of 60, are more likely to develop this disease
- **Age**: Individuals older than 50 are at greater risk
- **Ethnicity**: Ashkenazi Jews have greater risk
- **Personal history of ulcerative colitis or Crohn’s disease**: Increases risk
- **Personal or family history of ovarian, breast, or endometrial cancer**: Increases risk
- **Inherited colorectal syndromes**: About 10 percent of people who develop colorectal cancer are born with genetic susceptibility to the disease

What can you do if you have a family history of colorectal cancer?

- Lose weight if you are overweight
- Eat a balanced diet including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or fat-free dairy products, and lean meats
- Be active
- Drink less alcohol
- Quit smoking
- Talk to your health care provider about your family health history of cancer
- Get earlier and more frequent colorectal screening (at age 40 or ten years younger than your relative was at the time cancer was diagnosed)
- Get screened regularly
- Talk to a genetic counselor for cancer risk assessment, genetic counseling and genetic testing

Sources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov
- National Cancer Institute, www.cancer.gov
- The American Cancer Society, www.cancer.org

If you require this document in another format, such as large print, Braille or cassette tape, call 651-201-3609.