

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Awareness Month & CRC Screening**

**National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month**

**When is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month?**

Every March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. The month includes the Alliance’s Dress in Blue Day, which occurs on Friday, March 1, this year. Dress in Blue Day lets allies everywhere join the Colorectal Cancer Alliance’s mission to end colorectal cancer. By wearing blue, you bring awareness to this disease and support the Alliance’s life-saving work — as well as honor all who are impacted by colorectal cancer.

**What is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month?**

In February 2000, President Clinton officially dedicated March as National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. Since then, it has grown to be a rallying point for the colorectal cancer community where thousands of patients, survivors, caregivers and advocates throughout the country join together to spread colorectal cancer awareness by wearing blue, holding events, advocating for screening, and so much more.

**Importance of Screening**

**Who does colorectal cancer affect?**

One in 23 men and 1 in 25 women will be diagnosed with colorectal (colon or rectal) cancer in their lifetime. This disease affects men and women of all racial and ethnic groups and is most often found in people 50 years or older.

Incidence in those younger than 50, or young-onset colorectal cancer, is on the rise. Among those under age 55, the incidence rate is increasing by 1.5% every year. According to the latest data, colorectal cancer is the leading cause of cancer death among men under age 50.

Screening disparities are also evident among Black and Alaskan Native communities, which experience higher incidence and mortality rates.

Visit quiz.getscreened.org to find out how and when you should get checked.

**Why is it so important to get screened?**

Colorectal cancer (cancer of the colon and/or rectum) is the second leading cause of cancer death in the U.S., but it is also one of the most preventable and is highly treatable when discovered early. Screening can prevent many cases of colorectal cancer through the detection and removal of precancerous growths.

There are several safe and effective ways to get screened, including at-home options. Visit quiz.getscreened.org to learn more about the option that’s best for you.

**Why is it important to get checked on time?**

Getting checked for colorectal cancer can save your life. If caught early, you have a 91% chance of survival. Visit quiz.getscreened.org right now to find the screening options that are right for you.

**How To Get Screened**

**How do I get screened?**

There are several safe and effective ways to get screened. Most people have at-home options. Visit quiz.getscreened.org to learn more about the option that’s best for you and talk to your healthcare provider.

**I don’t want to get a colonoscopy. Are there other options?**

Yes. There are several screening options, including non-invasive at-home tests. However, your personal and family health histories may mean that colonoscopy is the best option for you. Visit quiz.getscreened.org to find screening options based on your risk. You can also speak with your healthcare provider to discuss your options further.

**I’m afraid of being screened for colorectal cancer. How do I overcome my fear?**

Many people are afraid. If your provider recommends colonoscopy, remind yourself that colorectal cancer is the only cancer that is preventable. Any polyps found during a colonoscopy are clipped out before they have a chance to develop into cancer. A colonoscopy is a very safe and routine procedure.

Also, most people have options for screening, including at-home tests. Visit quiz.getscreened.org to find screening options based on your risk. You can also speak with your healthcare provider to discuss your options further. A positive result on an at-home test will require a follow-up colonoscopy.

**Symptoms**

**I have symptoms, what should I do?**

Regardless of your age, you need to consult with a healthcare provider as soon as possible. They will help determine whether you need a diagnostic test. There might be insurance co-pays, deductibles, or other costs, but your healthcare team can help you learn what to expect.

You’re never too young to get colorectal cancer. It’s not as uncommon as you might think. About 12% of colorectal cancers are diagnosed in people under 50 in the U.S. every year, and that number is rising.

**I told my doctor about my symptoms, and they said not to worry. What do I do?**

If you are having blood in your stool, the only test that can assure it is hemorrhoids and not cancer is a colonoscopy. Make it clear you understand this is not a screening test, but a diagnostic test. If they still won’t make a referral, find another doctor. Advocating for yourself can save your life.

**Positive or Abnormal Results**

**What do I do if I have a positive at-home test?**

You will need a follow-up colonoscopy if you receive an abnormal or positive at-home test result. Talk to your healthcare provider and insurance company about whether a colonoscopy can be coded as a continuation of the screening process.

**What happens if I get diagnosed with cancer but don’t have insurance?**

You can ask for a meeting with a social worker at the hospital where you were diagnosed. They will help you fill out forms for appropriate programs that could help.

If you are a U.S. citizen or lawfully present in the U.S., visit [www.HealthCare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov/) to enroll in a health insurance plan, access your state’s health insurance marketplace, and view private health insurance options.

Many families qualify for federal health insurance. If you have a household income between 138% and 400% of the federal poverty level (FPL), you may qualify for Medicaid in your state. Visit to [www.HealthCare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov/) for more information.

A few states have high-risk insurance polls. Find out if your state is one at <http://triagecancer.org/stateresources>.

If you have additional questions, please contact the Colorectal Cancer Alliance helpline at (877) 422-2030 and Patient & Family Support Navigators will help connect you to available resources.

**Cost Questions**

**What if I can’t afford the cost of insurance, the cost of screening, or the cost of a diagnostic test?**

If this is a screening test and you have insurance, 100% of the cost should be covered by your insurance under the Affordable Care Act. If this is a diagnostic test or you have other concerns about the cost, please contact the Colorectal Cancer Alliance helpline at (877) 422-2030 and Patient & Family Support Navigators will help connect you to available resources.

**Insurance Questions**

**How do I know whether colorectal cancer screening is covered under my insurance?**

Under the Affordable Care Act, colorectal cancer screening is covered by insurance as preventive care for people at average risk of developing colorectal cancer. We recommend talking to your healthcare provider, insurance provider, or local gastroenterologist to learn more about your coverage and any financial assistance options they may have.

**What if I don’t have insurance, how do I get screened?**

If you are a U.S. citizen or lawfully present in the U.S., visit [www.HealthCare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov/) to enroll in a health insurance plan, access your state’s health insurance marketplace, and view private health insurance options.

For people with income between 138% and 400% of the federal poverty level (FPL), there are some financial assistance options to buy a plan or you may qualify for Medicaid in your state. Go to [www.HealthCare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov/) for more information.

**Additional Barriers to Screening**

**I can’t take time off of work to be screened. What do I do?**

While a colonoscopy is the gold standard for colorectal screening, there are other options that can be done at home. Visit quiz.getscreened.org to find screening options that are right for you and talk to your healthcare provider.

If your healthcare provider still recommends a colonoscopy due to your personal health risk, you can ask your gastroenterologist if they will take you first thing in the morning or as the last patient of the day so you only need to take half of a day off of work. Some providers may also perform colonoscopies on the weekend.

**I don’t have anyone to go with me to get screened. How can I get support?**

Some gastroenterology offices will allow you to take a rideshare or taxi if you wait in recovery for an extra hour. This is for your own safety. Also, check with your facility to see if they offer transportation assistance.

**I don’t have transportation to get screened. What do I do?**

Start with your family, friends, neighbors, and places you gather. The American Cancer Society also has a volunteer transportation program to get a ride from their volunteers. Contact them at (800) 227-2345 to discuss your options. For more help, visit our Support & Financial Resource Guide.

**There are no medical facilities near me. How can I get screened?**

Start with your primary care doctor. They may have a relationship with the nearest clinic or gastroenterologist in another town or city. For more assistance, call the Colorectal Cancer Alliance Helpline at 877-422-2030 to talk with one of our Patient & Family Support Navigators who can help guide you.

**I don’t have a doctor because I don’t have insurance, have limited insurance coverage, or doctors in my area won’t accept Medicaid. How do I get a healthcare provider to help me?**

Unfortunately, this is a challenge for many people. If you have any type of insurance, call your insurance provider for a list of doctors on your plan. If you have limited insurance coverage, call the Colorectal Cancer Alliance helpline at (877) 422-2030. If you don’t have insurance, and have an annual household income level below 138% of the federal poverty rate ($16,753 for an individual in 2018), and live in one of the following 32 states — AK, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DC, DE, HI, IA, IL, IN, KY, LA, MA, MD, MI, MN, MT, ND, NH, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OH, OR, PA, RI, VT, WA, WV — you may be eligible for Medicaid. Go to http://www.HealthCare.gov for more information. A few states also have high-risk insurance polls. Find out if your state is one at <http://triagecancer.org/stateresources>.