

Stool test to screen for colon cancer

What is a stool test for colon cancer?

The stool test is a screening test that looks for small amounts of blood in your stool that are too small to see. This blood can be an early sign of colon cancer, or could be a growth (polyp) that could turn into cancer. At Kaiser Permanente, we recommend the fecal immunochemical test (FIT), which requires only one sample.

Why is screening important?

Screening for colon cancer every year with FIT or every 10 years with colonoscopy saves lives.

Kaiser Permanente recommends that people at average risk begin screening for colon cancer starting at age 45. Options for colon cancer screening include **ONE** of the following:

- Stool FIT kit every year
- Colonoscopy every 10 years

Colon cancer, in its early stages, doesn't have any symptoms. Regular screening helps find cancer and polyps (growths) that can turn into cancer while still in the early, treatable, stages.

How do I do the stool test?

You'll be collecting a stool sample at home. It's very important that you follow the directions in the kit to get the most accurate results.

General instructions to follow include:

- Store the testing kit at room temperature.
- Follow all instructions provided with the testing kit.
- Collect the stool sample.
- Be sure to write the date that you took the stool sample on the tube. You will see a place to record the date just below the patient label. The lab won't be able to process your sample without the date.

If you have any questions about doing the kit, watch this quick video with easy-to-follow instructions:

[youtube.com/watch?v=NQyR9nfkgZE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQyR9nfkgZE)

What do I do with the test when I'm done?

- Mail the sample within 3 days of collection. Use the postage paid envelope included with your kit.
- You will receive your test results by mail and be able to see them on your online account on our secure member site at kp.org/wa.

If you have questions about how to collect your sample, please contact your doctor's office.

What do the results of the stool test mean?

Normal (negative) results

Normal results show that the lab didn't find any blood in your stool.

Abnormal (positive) results

Abnormal results show that the lab did find blood in your stool. This doesn't mean you have cancer, but you will need further testing. Generally, we recommend a colonoscopy as the next step.