

How to talk to your relatives and healthcare providers about colorectal cancer screening test

It's important to remember that everyone aged 45–75 needs to get regular screenings for colorectal cancer. By taking a step and starting the conversation, we can do our part in raising awareness and tackling the stigma surrounding colorectal cancer in our communities.

Talking to your relatives

Many people are hesitant when it comes to getting screened—it's easy to imagine the procedures as scary or invasive. However, there are several tests, some of which can be done at home. It's important to talk with your loved ones over the age of 45 who might be hesitant and encourage them to get screened. There are several ways you can start this conversation with a loved one.

Start by saying, “I care about you.”

“I want you to live a long and healthy life.”

“I want you to get tested so you don't have to worry about colorectal cancer.”

Explain why getting tested is important.

“Colorectal cancer is one of the most common cancers. People over age 50 have the highest risk.”

“If the doctor finds a growth in your colon, it can be removed before it turns into cancer.”

Remind them that you are there to support them.

“What part of the screen are you most worried about?”

“How can I make it easier for you to get screened?”

“Some parts of the test might make you uncomfortable, but it'll be over quickly.”

Talking to your healthcare providers

When it comes to colorectal cancer screening, it's not just our loved ones that we need to encourage. At some point, we all will need to prepare ourselves to schedule regular screenings. For many, approaching this topic can be scary and confusing, but a great first step is talking to your doctor about your options. The hardest part is starting the conversation, but here are some tips on how to do that.

Ask questions!

“When should I be screened?”

“One of my family members has colorectal cancer. Should I be getting tested?”

“How much does screening cost? Will my insurance cover it? What if I don't have insurance?”

Familiarize yourself with your options.

“Which screening tests do you recommend? Are there less invasive options?”

“How can I prepare? Do I need to change my diet or my usual medication schedule?”

“How much time do I need to take off from work for preparation and recovery time?”

Address your fears.

“Will the screening test be uncomfortable or painful?”

“Will I be awake for the screening?”

“Are there any risks?”

Reference

1. CDC. Screening for Colorectal Cancer. Colorectal Cancer. https://www.cdc.gov/colorectal-cancer/screening/index.html#cdc_testing_when_to_tested-screening-recommendations (accessed 2026-07-10).