

PEI Colorectal Cancer Screening Program Frequently Asked Questions

Who should participate in the Colorectal Cancer Screening Program?

Low/average risk people aged 50-74:

- Low or average risk people are those with no signs or symptoms (such as irregular bowel movements, blood in their stool, long standing diarrhea or vomiting).
- No immediate family history (father, mother, brother, sister).
- No previous diagnosis of colon cancer or other cancers.

NOTE: If you are over 74 years, have never had a colonoscopy or done regular stool samples, talk to your healthcare provider about what screening is right for you.

If I am at a higher risk of colon cancer what should I do?

(Stool sample screening is NOT recommended as the only screen test for you)

- I have immediate family history: It is recommended that you be referred for colonoscopy at age 40 or 10 years earlier than the youngest affected family member at the time of diagnosis. (E.g., mother has colon cancer at age 50, immediate family should begin colonoscopy screening at age 40).
- I have had a history of polyps. I continue to work with the specialist/surgeon on a routine for polyp removal.
- I have had colon cancer or another type of cancer. Talk with your healthcare provider about your risk and what screening is right for you.

I am at a low/average risk for colon cancer and between 50-74 years old. How do I get screened?

- Pick up your stool collection kit at any health centre or have a kit mailed by calling the Colorectal Screening Program (1-888-561-2233).
- Complete a stool sample collection kit at home every 2 years.

Dietary or Medication Restrictions During Testing:

- FIT has no restrictions.

Where to I drop off my completed stool sample collection?

- At your local health centre or at any PEI hospital laboratory.
- Make sure your collection containers and request form are completed with your name, health card number and date of collection.

Who can I talk to if I have questions?

- The Colorectal Cancer Screening Program Coordinator can be reached toll-free at 1-888-561-2233 or 368-5901.
- A healthcare professional.

Why should I participate in the Colorectal Cancer Screening Program?

To detect colon cancer early:

- When found at its earliest stages, colon cancer has a higher survival rate and can require less treatment and surgery.
- Majority of colon cancers on PEI are found at the latest stages (3-4). The screening program is working to have more people regularly screened so that we can reduce colon cancer on PEI.
- Atlantic Canadians have the highest rate of colon cancer in Canada.
- PEI Women continue to see an increase of colon cancer while the rest of the country has not.

As a participant in the program you will:

- Receive a letter explaining your test result in the mail;
- Receive a reminder letter every 2 years to get screened again if necessary;
- Reduce your chances of having colon cancer or find it early so that survival is much better;
- If you have a family healthcare provider, a copy of your results will be sent to them;
- If you do not have a family healthcare provider, your test results will be monitored by the program.

What if I have a positive/abnormal stool test result?

The Colorectal Screening Program:

- Will mail you a letter explaining your test result;
- Monitor your wait times for any follow-up care;
- Answer your questions and provide information.

Your Family Healthcare provider:

- Will receive a copy of your test results;
- Should call you in for an appointment to review the result, discuss any symptoms you are having, review your family history of colon diseases and your personal history of colon issues;
- If further diagnosis testing is needed, they will refer you to a specialist/surgeon;
- Colonoscopy is the usual follow-up step but this varies by patient diagnosis need.

What if I do not have a family healthcare provider?

- The Colorectal Screening Program does not require a referral for stool sample screening.
- You do not require a healthcare provider's appointment to get a test kit. The at-home test can be picked up at any health centre or be can be mailed to you from the program office (1-888-561-2233).
- If you have a positive/abnormal test result, the Colorectal Screening Program will have a physician or nurse practitioner in your region complete the follow-up care.