

The American Cancer Society (ACS) has lowered its colorectal cancer screening age guideline to **45 years**

What you should know about the new ACS guideline

ACS has lowered its recommended starting age for colorectal cancer screening to 45

- The previous ACS recommendation (2008) was to begin screening at age 50
- It is estimated that an additional 21 million people in the US are now eligible for colorectal cancer screening under the new ACS guideline

ACS screening options for adults age 45 years and older who are at average risk of colorectal cancer include either a high-sensitivity, stool-based test or a visual exam

	Test	Frequency
Stool-based	FIT	Every year
	Highly-sensitive-guaiac-based fecal occult blood test (HSgFOBT)	Every year
	Multi-targeted stool DNA test (mt SDNA)	Every 3 years
Visual exams of the colon and rectum	Colonoscopy	Every 10 years
	CT colonography (CTC) (virtual colonoscopy)	Every 5 years
	Flexible sigmoidoscopy (FS)	Every 5 years

- The new ACS guideline stresses that when a screening test (other than colonoscopy) comes back positive, that test must be followed with a timely colonoscopy to complete the screening process

People at increased or high risk for colorectal cancer may need to start screening before 45 years, and be tested more often than recommended above

- High-risk individuals include those with a strong family or personal history of colorectal cancer or certain types of polyps, a history of inflammatory bowel disease, a known family history of a hereditary colorectal cancer syndrome, or a history of radiation to the abdomen to treat a prior cancer
- ACS does not have screening guidelines for high-risk individuals and recommends referring to those published by the US Multi-Society Task Force on Colorectal Cancer (2017)

How to use this information

- Help promote best practices in colorectal cancer screening by spreading awareness about the ACS guideline change among providers and other decision makers
- A recommended screening test option for all age groups, including 45 to 49 years old, is InSure® ONE™. The InSure® ONE™ FDA submission included clinical data for subjects in this early age range

FAQ

Why did ACS lower the colorectal cancer screening age guideline?

- While colorectal cancer is still relatively uncommon in the 45-49 year age group, there has been a 1% increase in colorectal cancer among those under 55 since 1994
 - The ACS updated the guideline to save more lives through early detection of colorectal cancer, when treatment is more likely to be successful, and through detection and removal of polyps, which contributes to the prevention of colorectal cancer
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Why do the new ACS colorectal cancer screening guidelines differ from the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) guidelines?

- In their updated guidelines, ACS considered a recent study showing a rising incidence of colorectal cancer in younger adults. This study had not yet been published when the USPSTF updated their colorectal cancer screening recommendations in 2016. ACS is now encouraging the USPSTF and other societies to update their recommendations accordingly. It is likely that this will happen in the near future.
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Do health plans cover colorectal screening for patients aged 45 to 49?

- Health insurance plans may not yet cover the screening test for those in the 45 to 49-year age coverage without cost-sharing based on recommendations issued by the USPSTF. The USPSTF last updated its recommendations in 2016, and recommends individuals begin screening at age 50. While insurers could choose to offer coverage of colorectal cancer screening tests earlier, they are not currently required to do so.
 - Some screening options, such as FIT, are much more affordable than others. Therefore, providers can consider these options for their patients to minimize out-of-pocket expenses for individuals in the early age range.
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Why not just recommend colonoscopy for everyone? Isn't colonoscopy the “gold standard”?

- Given the evidence that adults vary in their test preferences, the ACS guidelines development committee emphasized that screening utilization and adherence could be improved by offering a choice of tests. While colonoscopy is sometimes called the “gold standard”, it has that label mostly because it is used to evaluate the performance of other screening tests. However, in day-to-day use, it is not perfect, and the evidence shows that if adults are adherent to annual FOBT with a high-sensitivity test, long-term outcomes are similar to those that are estimated to be achieved with colonoscopy.
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Is Cologuard® recommended under the new ACS guidelines?

- Cologuard® is FDA-approved for screening for colorectal cancer in asymptomatic individuals from age 50 years. The test does not have a claim for the 45 to 49-year age range, although the ACS does not specifically exclude the test from its guidelines.

Further reading

American Cancer Society. Colorectal cancer screening guideline issue brief. May 30, 2018. http://nccrt.org/wp-content/uploads/CRC-Issue-Brief_FINAL.NCCRT5_30.18.pdf. Accessed June 20, 2018.

Wolf ADM, Fontham ETH, Church TR, et al. Colorectal cancer screening for average-risk adults: 2018 guideline update from the American Cancer Society. *CA Cancer J Clin*. 2018 May 30. doi: 10.3322/caac.21457.

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