## What is colon cancer?
The colon and rectum are parts of the digestive system. Colon cancer begins when cells that are not normal grow inside the colon or rectum.
The cancer often begins as a small growth called a polyp. Polyps are not cancer, but they can turn into cancer over time. Polyps can be removed to prevent cancer.

## What are the symptoms?
**There usually are no symptoms of colon cancer at first.** When the disease is more advanced, symptoms may include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blood in the stool</td>
<td>Weight loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A change in bowel habits</td>
<td>Feeling tired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramps</td>
<td>Nausea</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## SCREENING SAVES LIVES
Screening is important because early-stage colon cancer may not have symptoms. **Screening means looking for signs of disease before symptoms appear.** Two types of tests that check for signs of colon cancer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stool Tests</strong></td>
<td>look for signs of colon cancer in the stool (poop) and can be done at home with a kit that is used to collect a sample. The sample is sent to a lab to be tested. Examples of these tests include Fecal Occult Blood Tests (FOBT/FIT) and Stool DNA tests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visual Tests</strong></td>
<td>are done by a doctor who looks for signs of cancer inside the colon and rectum with a thin, lighted tube. Examples include Colonoscopy, Flexible Sigmoidoscopy, and CT Colonography.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Who should be screened?
**People who are of average risk should begin colon cancer screening at age 45.**

You may be at higher risk if and should talk with your doctor about screening earlier if:

- You or a close relative has had colon polyps or colon cancer
- You have an inflammatory bowel disease or certain inherited conditions

---

The information on this flyer is from the National Cancer Institute, the American Cancer Society, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
Tips to lower your cancer risk:

- Get screened regularly
- Exercise daily
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Eat foods high in fiber
- Limit alcohol
- Quit smoking

What if I can't afford the tests?

- Most cancer screenings are covered by insurance, Medicare, and Medicaid.
- You should check with your insurance company to ask about screening requirements, and to find out if you are eligible.

The Kentucky Colon Cancer Screening Program offers free colon cancer screening services for those meeting eligibility requirements.

For additional information:

Visit [www.kycancerprogram.org](http://www.kycancerprogram.org) and click on the Pathfinder link to find cancer support services and programs near you.

Visit [www.kycancerprogram.org](http://www.kycancerprogram.org) to connect with your local Regional Cancer Control Specialist.

**National Cancer Institute**
1-800-4-CANCER, www.cancer.gov

**American Cancer Society**
1-800-ACS-2345, www.cancer.org

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**
www.cdc.gov