

# HEALTHY LIVING

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## MARCH FUN FACT

### Folic Acid Fights Against Colon Cancer

Did you know folic acid helps your body fight against colon cancer? Keep reading to discover other great benefits and recipes high in folic acid!

## Prevent Colon Cancer with a Colonoscopy

by Csaba Mera, MD, FAAP, FRCPSC

If you're 50 or older, your doctor has probably recommended you get a colonoscopy. You may have friends or family members who have had this procedure, and you've heard funny and frightening stories about it. You're probably asking yourself (or your doctor), "Why would I want to go through all that?" So, let's talk about it.

### Who's Behind It All?

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) evaluates the scientific evidence for various screening and preventive tests and updates recommendations as necessary. Other clinical experts also perform similar assessments, such as the American College of Physicians and the American Cancer Society. They all agree: adults with an average risk of colon cancer should have a screening test starting at age 50 on through age 75. Beyond age 75, the benefit of screening has not been well demonstrated. Also, for adults with a family history or other increased risk of colorectal

(or colon) cancer, screening may need to be done earlier and more frequently.

### Is a Colonoscopy My Only Option for Colorectal Cancer Screening?

There are a number of screening tests available. A [colonoscopy](#) every 10 years is proposed as the gold standard. However, other tests have also shown good results and are easier to complete. The simplest one is a [fecal immunochemical test \(FIT\)](#). The FIT is a laboratory analysis of a tiny stool sample, which can be collected at home and sent to the laboratory using a special mailer. This test needs to be performed annually, but is easy and does not require fasting and cleansing enemas prior to testing.

Additional options are discussed in our next article on page 2. You should talk to your physician about the best option for you, based on your overall health and any potential risk factors.

### What's My Risk for Colorectal Cancer?

It's important to [understand your colon cancer risk](#). Some of the risk factors are related to lifestyle issues you can control, such as a diet high in red and processed meats, smoking, heavy alcohol use, physical inactivity, and obesity.

Reduce your risks by eating low-fat foods and plenty of vegetables and fruit. Get regular exercise and try to maintain a healthy weight. Limit alcohol intake to one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men. And, of course, don't smoke.

Your doctor can help you determine your risks, so if you are 50 or older, or have a higher risk of colon cancer, make an appointment today.

(Sources 1-3)

# Colon Cancer Screening: Alternatives to a Colonoscopy

by Marti Carl, RN, BS

Please know that colon cancer is more treatable if caught early. That's a good reason to learn about colon cancer screening and to get tested when it is time. This article is about the screening tests you can do at home.

Your colon is part of your digestive system, the long path for foods and fluids that starts at your mouth. After your body makes use of the food you eat by chewing and then extracting the nutrients through your stomach and intestines (small and large colon), your body gets rid of the leftovers through bowel movements. Colon cancer starts out as abnormal cells on the inner surface of your colon that divide uncontrollably and can eventually form a tumor. These tumors can bleed, and there are simple at-home tests available that check for tiny amounts of blood in the stool that are not usually visible.

These tests involve taking stool samples from several different days, placing a very small amount on a piece of treated testing card or in a tube, securing the sample in a mailing envelope, and sending it to a lab. The results are sent to your doctor. If the test shows blood in the stool, it will be necessary to follow up with other tests, including a colonoscopy.

- Fecal Occult Blood Test – There are two types of fecal occult blood tests, and they are usually done once a year.
  1. Guiac FOBT or gFOBT uses a chemical to detect heme, which is a component of your blood. You need to avoid certain foods before doing this test.
  2. FIT FOBT or iFOBT uses an immunochemical to detect a specific blood protein. This test does not require dietary restrictions.



- Stool DNA Test – The FDA-approved stool DNA test is called Cologuard, which looks for tiny amounts of blood and changes in your genes that may indicate cancer activity. This test is more sensitive than the first two tests, but it also has more false-positives (i.e., detecting what appears to be an abnormality when none are actually present). This test is usually done every three years.

The U.S. Preventive Task Force recommends people with an average risk of colorectal cancer get screened regularly beginning at age 50. If your doctor asks you to do one of these at-home tests, be sure to read and follow the directions. If you are 50 or older and have not had one of these tests in the last year, or if you have any concerns about your colon health, please discuss this with your doctor.

(Sources 4,5)

## QUICK TIPS

### Best Exercises for Colon Health

Many of us exercise regularly as a means to improve the health and function of our bodies, but did you know there are a number of exercises that assist in improving your colon health? Several yoga poses, such as the “cobra,” help stretch out your core muscles and aid in the cleansing of your digestive system. Stomach crunches are another great exercise for improving colon health. By strengthening these muscles, matter can be passed through the colon more quickly, allowing for faster release of toxins from the body. If these don't suit you, try walking more throughout the day to increase blood flow! This toned-down exercise can help your digestive system operate more efficiently.

(Source 6)





# Fabulous Fiber

by McKenzi Blanton



It's no secret fiber is an important part of your diet, but many of us are still unaware of the advantages it can provide to our health. Below are some benefits of increasing your fiber intake.

## Types of Fiber

First, let's talk about the different types of fiber out there. There are two types of fiber, soluble and insoluble. Soluble fiber dissolves or swells in water, similar to the way oatmeal gets softer in water. Foods that contain soluble fiber are beans, fruit, and oats. Insoluble fiber does not dissolve, but is instead broken down by the bacteria inside the intestinal tract. Good sources of insoluble fiber include brown rice, wheat, and all plants (especially vegetables!). When combined, soluble and insoluble fibers create dietary fiber, which helps improve gastrointestinal health.

## Benefits of Fiber

Incorporating a high-fiber diet into your healthy lifestyle helps keep your bowel movements regular, and also reduces the risk of diverticulosis and diverticulitis. Diverticulosis is a condition where diverticula, or pouches, develop in the colon, but don't cause symptoms. These pouches develop when the colon has to exert more pressure during bowel movements. Adequate amounts of fiber in your diet allow for bowel movements that can move more easily through the colon. Diverticulitis occurs when these pouches become inflamed and can be very painful. Doctors are still not sure what causes diverticulitis, but believe low-fiber diets play a role in causing the condition. Diets high in fiber have been known to reduce the risk of this condition, as well as the

risk of colon cancer. Some other benefits of incorporating more fiber into your diet include:

- Reduced risk of gallstones and kidney stones
- Blood sugar control
- Heart health
- Decreased risk of stroke
- Weight loss and management
- Skin health
- Reduced risk of hemorrhoids
- Relief from Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

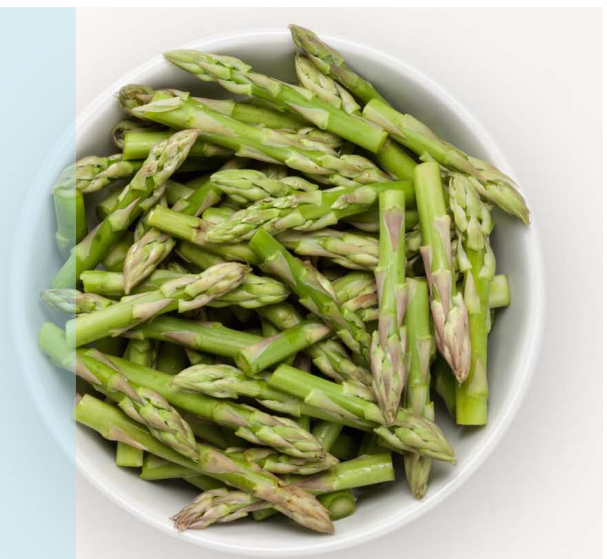
(Sources 7-10)

## FUN FACT

### Folic Acid Fights Colon Cancer

Did you know folic acid helps your body fight against colon cancer? A 2008 study in World Journal of Gastroenterology demonstrated the importance of including folic acid in your diet. In a study of 94 participants, they found those who consumed less folic acid had three times as many adenomas – polyps that can turn into malignant tumors and possibly colon cancer – compared to the beginning of the study. Plus, they were more than twice as likely to have the polyps recur three years later. A great reason for you to include more folic acid in your diet! Some easy ways to get more folic acid: citrus fruits, nuts, and lentils. There are also plenty of leafy green vegetables to choose from, like broccoli, spinach, and asparagus!

(Source 11)



## LEMON & ASPARAGUS PASTA

2 cups wheat penne (uncooked, or other short pasta shape, you can use a gluten-free pasta if you like)  
1 bunch asparagus (cut into 2-inch lengths)  
1 cup non-dairy milk (your favorite, such as soy or almond)

Zest from 1 lemon  
1½ Tbsp. lemon juice  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
2 Tbsp. all-purpose flour (or gluten-free all-purpose blend)  
2 tsp. Dijon mustard  
¼ teaspoon salt



1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil, and boil the pasta according to package directions. In the last 3 minutes of cooking time, toss in the asparagus.
2. In the meantime, whisk together all of the sauce ingredients in a bowl. Alternately, you could mix them together in a blender.
3. Drain pasta and asparagus and return to pot. Add in the sauce and toss well to combine and heat through.

*Nutrient Analysis per serving (4 servings): 262 Calories; 2.1 g Fat (.3 g Saturated Fat); 0 mg Cholesterol; 50 g Carbohydrates; 10.8 g Protein; 4 g Fiber; 208 mg Sodium.*

(Source 12)

## JICAMA, PAPAYA AVOCADO SALAD

1/2 papaya (diced)  
1 jicama (peeled and diced)  
1 avocado (diced)  
2 green onions (sliced thin including the green)  
1 jalapeno chilies (seeded, diced finely)  
1 tablespoon olive oil

1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar  
1/4 cups chopped cilantro  
salt  
pepper



1. Dice papaya, jicama, avocado, onion, and jalapeno.
2. In bowl, mix vegetables with oil, vinegar, cilantro, salt and pepper.

*Nutrient Analysis per serving (4 servings): 200 Calories; 11 g Fat; 0 mg Cholesterol; 26 g Carbohydrates; 4 g Protein; 14 g Fiber; 210 mg Sodium.*

(Source 13)

### Sources:

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