

Cancer Screening: Talk to Your Doctor

Learn about:

- Why cancer screening is important
- How to prepare yourself to talk to your doctor about cancer screening
- Where to get more information

What is cancer screening?

Cancer screening looks for cancer before you have symptoms to find cancer early or stop it from developing.

Cancer screening is done on people who are at risk of getting cancer, but have no symptoms and generally feel fine. Cancer screening tests are not meant to diagnose cancer. They help figure out which people are more likely to have cancer or get cancer in the future.



Why is cancer screening important?

It is important for people of all ages, including people who have already had cancer, to be screened because it helps prevent, treat, and cure cancer easier by finding possible cancer cells early.

Treatment has a better chance of working when cancer is treated early.

- Regular breast cancer screening can find cancer when it is small and there is a better chance of treating it successfully.
- Cervical cancer is almost entirely preventable with regular screening, appropriate and timely follow-up of abnormal Pap test results, and HPV shots.
- Someone with colorectal cancer has a 90% chance of being cured (that's 9 out of 10 people) if the cancer is caught early enough through screening.
- Some lung cancers can be found early through screening, and treated early.

What are the screening programs in Ontario?

There are 4 cancer screening programs in Ontario:

- breast
- cervical
- colorectal
- lung

Important note about prostate cancer screening: There is currently no screening program in Ontario for prostate cancer as screening can result in over-diagnosis and over-treatment. If you have a family history of prostate cancer or other risk factors, speak to your doctor about the Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) test that can be used to screen for prostate cancer.

Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) sends letters to people for breast, cervical, and colorectal cancers to:

- invite them to get screened
- remind them when it is time for their next screening test
- tell them their screening test results
- tell them what to do if they have an abnormal test result

Ontario Health does not send letters for lung screening. People who are at risk of getting lung cancer may be referred to the program by their health care provider or can contact an Ontario Lung Screening Program site hospital directly to see if they are eligible for a screening program.

Remember:

- ✓ Screening for breast, cervical, colorectal and lung cancers can reduce cancer deaths.
- ✓ Follow the cancer screening guidelines in Ontario and talk to your doctor or health care provider about getting checked.
- ✓ Know your body and talk to your doctor or health care provider about any changes or symptoms.



How do I know what cancer screening I need?

- Your doctor or health care provider can tell you about tests you may need and when you should be screened.
- If you have a family history of cancer or other risk factors, you may need to be screened earlier or more often.
- Talk to your doctor or health care provider and ask questions.

What information do I need and what questions should I ask?

Before you visit with your doctor or health care provider, be sure to find out more about your family history and write down any questions you may have about cancer screening.

Here are some questions you may want to ask:

- What is my cancer risk?
- What screening tests should I have?
- What are the risks and benefits of cancer screening?
- What should I do to prepare for the test?
- What happens during the test?
- How often should I get screened?
- When will I get my results?
- Where can I get more information?

How can I help family and friends?

Talk to your friends and family about cancer screening. Even if it may seem embarrassing to talk about, sharing what you know with them may help.

You could talk about:

- your upcoming doctor's appointments
- the cancer screening tests available
- why it is important to get screened

Encourage and support others to get screened to help save lives.
Start talking today!

For more information

For current cancer screening programs in Ontario visit:

Ontario Ministry of Health

- Website: www.health.gov.on.ca/en (search “cancer screening”)

Canadian Cancer Society

- Website: <https://cancer.ca/en> (click on “Prevention”, then “Getting Checked”)

Sources:

1. Cancer Care Ontario <https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/cancer-care-ontario/programs/screening-programs>
2. Cancer View Canada www.cancerview.ca/portal/server.pt/community/colonversation

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