



Cancer Screening and Early Diagnosis

Sometimes cancer can be found before it causes symptoms. Checking for cancer (or the conditions that may lead to cancer) in a person who does not have any symptoms is called screening.

In regular physical exams, your doctor looks for anything unusual and feels for any lumps or growths. Specific screening tests such as lab tests, x-rays, or other procedures are used regularly for only a few types of cancer.

- ❑ **BREAST: A mammogram** is the best tool available to find breast cancer before symptoms appear. It is a breast x-ray that can show the presence of cancer in the breasts **up to two years before** the cancer can be felt by you or your doctor. Research has shown that a regular mammogram can detect tumors at an early stage, when they are small and most responsive to treatment.
HOW OFTEN: Every 1 to 2 years for women in their 40s and older
- ❑ **CERVIX:** Doctors use the **Pap test** to screen for cancer of the cervix. In this test, cells are collected from the cervix and then examined under a microscope to detect cancer or changes that may lead to cancer.
HOW OFTEN: At least once every 3 years, beginning about 3 years after a woman becomes sexually active and no later than age 21
- ❑ **COLON AND RECTUM:** A number of screening tests are used to detect colorectal cancer (cancer of the colon or rectum). People over the age of 50 or with a family history of colorectal cancer are at higher risk for the disease. Your doctor may suggest more frequent screening if you are considered to be at higher risk.

Your doctor may suggest one or more of these tests **for both men and women:**

- **Fecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT):** Sometimes tumors in the colon or rectum can bleed. An FOBT tests for blood in the stool.
HOW OFTEN: Every year
- **Flexible Sigmoidoscopy:** During this test, your doctor will use a flexible tube to examine the rectum and lower portion of the colon, in search for polyps (non-cancerous growths that may lead to colorectal cancer).
HOW OFTEN: Every 5 years
- **Double Contrast Barium Enema:** Using an x-ray in a clinic or a hospital, your doctor injects a liquid called barium sulfate and air into the rectum in order to get a view of the large intestine.
HOW OFTEN: Every 5 years

- **Colonoscopy:** This procedure allows your doctor to see the lining of the entire colon. Also, your doctor can remove any polyps that are found during this procedure.

HOW OFTEN: Every 10 years

Your doctor may also suggest screening for cancers of the skin, lung, and mouth; prostate for men and ovarian for women.

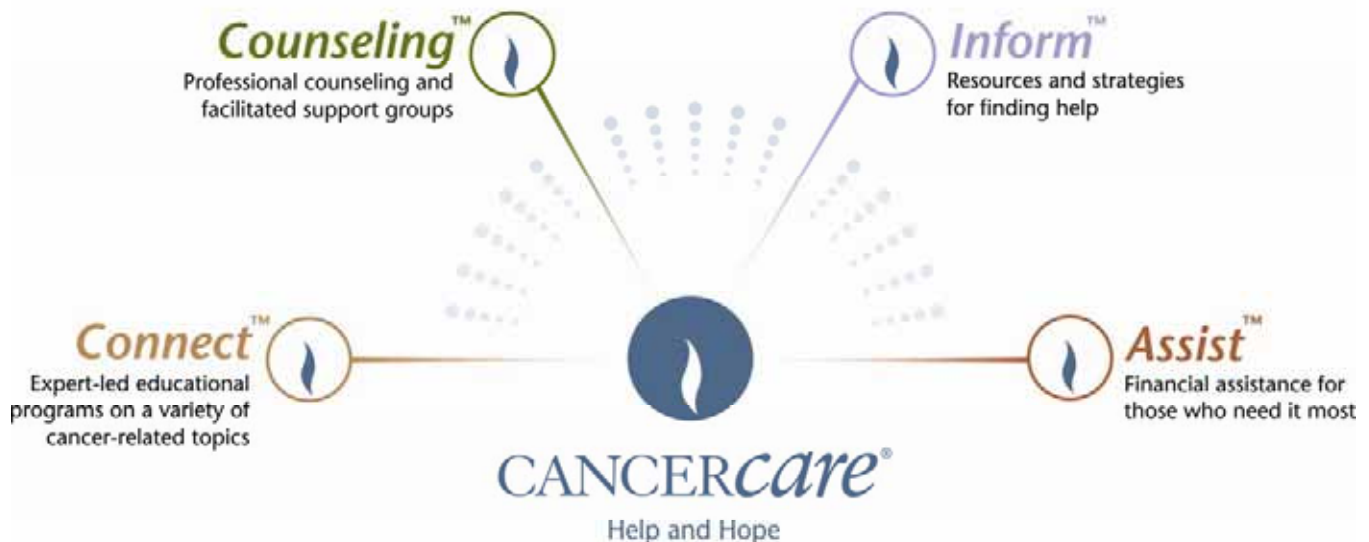
Discuss the concerns or questions you have about screening with your doctor so you can weigh the pros and cons and make informed decisions about screening tests.

* From the National Cancer Institute

CancerCare Can Help

CancerCare's staff of professional oncology social workers can help you deal with a diagnosis of cancer. Our social workers offer people with cancer and their loved ones counseling and support groups via the telephone, online, or in person. CancerCare also offers education, information and referrals to other resources that help you cope with a cancer diagnosis.

The *CANCERCare* Constellation of Services



CancerCare's services are provided
free of charge to anyone affected by cancer

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