

Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca. You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

An archive of past wellness articles is available at <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/9966.asp>

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Colorectal cancer screening saves lives

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. If you're between the ages of 50 and 74, the Alberta Health Services (AHS) Alberta Colorectal Cancer Screening Program team wants to remind you about the importance of getting screened for colorectal cancer.

Colorectal cancer is one of the leading causes of cancer deaths in Alberta. Most cases of colorectal cancer are in people age 50 and older with no family history. Most colorectal cancers begin as small growths called polyps. Not all polyps turn into cancer, but some polyps can turn into cancer if they're not removed early.

Why is screening important?

Getting screened regularly can find colorectal cancer at its early stages when treatment is more effective. Ninety per cent of cases can be treated successfully when the cancer is found early. Screening can also prevent colorectal cancer by finding and removing polyps early before they turn into cancer.

It's important to remember that screening is for people who do not have symptoms. You should get screened even if you feel healthy.

What is FIT?

The Fecal Immunochemical Test, or FIT, is the recommended screening test for everyone age 50 to 74 who are at average risk for colorectal cancer. This means people who have no symptoms and no personal or family history in a first-degree relative (your parents or siblings). FIT is an easy test you can do right at home. It looks for blood in your stool (poop) that you can't see. Plan to get screened with FIT every year starting at age 50.

How to Get Your FIT Kit

There are two easy ways for you to get your free FIT kit in Alberta. Choose what works best for you.

- Talk to your doctor or regular healthcare provider. They will give you a form that you take to the lab to pick up your FIT kit.
- Or order online at screeningforlife.ca or by calling AHS Screening Programs toll-free at 1-866-727-3926 to have your FIT kit mailed to you.

Once you complete your FIT, drop it off at the lab closest to you for testing. You'll receive your results in the mail within a few weeks. Talk to your doctor if you have questions about your results or any next steps.

If you're 50 to 74, make colorectal cancer screening part of your regular health routine. Getting screened can save your life.

Visit screeningforlife.ca to learn more about colorectal cancer screening and FIT.