



Cancer screenings: Key to early detection

More and more Americans are surviving cancer. This is partly due to early detection of the disease. Screening tests are used to identify cancer before it causes any symptoms. Usually, the sooner cancer is found, the better the chance it can be treated before it has spread. This often means that treatment will be more successful.

Get started with screenings

A physical examination by a healthcare provider can be part of a screening test. An X-ray, laboratory test, or genetic test can also be done. In many cases, a mix of methods—such as clinical breast exam and mammography—is best.

Which cancer screenings should you have and when? Your provider can answer those questions based on your age, medical history, your family health history, and other risk factors you may have.

The bottom line is that early detection of cancer can save many lives. And a key piece of early detection is the use of screening tests.

Common cancer screenings

The following are the American Cancer Society's screening recommendations for certain cancers. Other organizations may have varying guidelines. Talk with your provider to determine the screening schedule and frequency that is best for you. Depending on your personal risk factors and medical history, you may start screening earlier.

Source: American Cancer Society

Cancer Type	Sex	Screening Test	How Often
Breast 	F	Mammogram	Every year, beginning at age 45 (or 40, if recommended) until age 54, then every other year for women ages 55 and older
Cervical 	F	Primary HPV test	Every 5 years, beginning at age 25 until age 65 If primary HPV testing is not available, screening may be done with either a co-test (HPV test combined with a Pap test) every 5 years or a Pap test alone every 3 years
Colorectal (One of the tests to the right will be done) 	M/F	Guaiac-based fecal occult blood test (gFOBT) Fecal immunochemical test (FIT) Stool DNA test (mt-sDNA) Flexible sigmoidoscopy (FSIG) Virtual colonoscopy Colonoscopy	Every year, beginning at age 45 Every year, beginning at age 45 Every 3 years, beginning at age 45 Every 5 years, beginning at age 45 Every 5 years, beginning at age 45 Every 10 years, beginning at age 45
Lung 	M/F	Low-dose computed tomography (LDCT) scans	Every year for people who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are 50 to 80 years old and in fairly good health, and • Currently smoke or have quit in the past 15 years, and • Have at least a 20 pack-year smoking history To calculate a pack-year, multiply the number of packs smoked per day by the number of years smoked. For example, someone who has smoked two packs a day for 10 years has 20 pack-years of smoking.
Prostate 	M	Prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood test	Men ages 50 and older should discuss the advantages and limitations of this test with their providers Men at high risk should have discussions starting at age 45