

What is a colonoscopy?

Colonoscopy is a procedure that allows a physician to see the inside lining of your rectum and colon using a special instrument called a colonoscope.

A colonoscope is a flexible tube with a miniature camera attached to one end so that the physician can take pictures and videos of your colon. During a colonoscopy, tissue samples can be collected and polyps can be removed.

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Any questions regarding the collection of the information by BC Cancer can be directed to the Operations Director, Cancer Screening (address: 801 – 686 West Broadway, Vancouver BC V5Z 1G1, web: www.screeningbc.ca or email: screening@bccancer.bc.ca)

This brochure is also available in other languages including Punjabi and Chinese. Visit www.screeningbc.ca to access translated versions.

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Abnormal Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT)

Answering your questions
about an abnormal FIT

An abnormal fecal immunochemical test (FIT) result means that blood was found in the stool sample that you submitted. Abnormal FIT results are common and do not mean that you have cancer.

Approximately ten per cent of people screened with FIT will have an abnormal result and will require additional testing. This does not mean that a cancer was found – the vast majority of people with an abnormal FIT result will not have cancer.

Some people with an abnormal FIT result may have polyps. Polyps are small growths that can develop in the colon or rectum, often with no symptoms in early stages of growth. Most polyps will never turn into cancer, and for those that do, it will take many years for this transition, which is why people between the ages of 50 to 74 years should be screened regularly.

What causes an abnormal result?

The FIT is a screening test that can only detect blood in the stool. FIT is not a diagnostic test. This means that while FIT can find one sign that may indicate cancer (blood in the stool), it cannot be used to diagnose cancer or identify why there was blood in your stool.

An abnormal FIT result simply means that blood was found in the stool sample you submitted. FIT can only tell us that you may be bleeding from somewhere in your lower digestive tract. It cannot tell us from which part or why.

There may be a number of different reasons why blood was found in your stool, including ulcers, hemorrhoids (sometimes painless or internal), anal fissures, diverticular disease, or inflammation.

If you have an abnormal FIT result, it is important that you be assessed for colonoscopy. Colonoscopy can find out where the bleeding may be coming from.



What you should know

- An abnormal FIT does not mean you have cancer.
- It is important to attend all follow-up appointments for tests or treatment.
- If polyps are found, most are removed during colonoscopy.

What happens after an abnormal FIT result?

After you receive your abnormal FIT result in the mail, you will be contacted by the health care team in your community regarding further follow-up. The health care team will assess your condition and book a colonoscopy procedure if appropriate, or let you know if other monitoring or treatment is advised.

While waiting for your follow-up, please ensure your health care provider is aware if you develop these symptoms at any time:

- Blood in your stool
- Change in bowel habits
- Abdominal pain
- Unexplained weight loss