

Colorectal Cancer Screening FAQs



If I do not meet the criteria for colorectal cancer screening programme, can I still participate in other screening programmes?

Yes, even if you do not meet the eligibility criteria for colorectal cancer screening, you may still participate in other screening programmes, such as the CVD risk factor, breast cancer or cervical cancer screening programmes, provided that you meet their eligibility requirements.

Note: For colorectal cancer screening, the upper age limit is 75 years, unless clinically justified.

How do I prepare for the colorectal cancer screening (Faecal Immunochemical Test or FIT)?

To prepare for the FIT, you will need to collect a small sample of your stool and place it in a stool container. Ensure that the lid of the container is secure to prevent leakage. Clearly label your name, identification card number, and the date and time of collection. Place the stool container into the biohazard labelled specimen bag and seal it tightly. Submit the sample to the phlebotomy services counter located at your designated health centre on the same day of collection.

Reminder:

- You can consume your regular diet (no restrictions) and continue taking your regular medications
- If you are experiencing bleeding due to haemorrhoids (piles), blood in the urine or menstruation (period) then wait until the bleeding has stopped or ended before collecting the stool sample.

Are there any health risks from using the FIT kit?

There are no health risks associated with using the FIT kit. If your FIT result is positive, you will be counselled to undergo further tests, such as a colonoscopy. While colonoscopy is generally safe, there is a small risk of complications, such as damage to the bowel, but this is rare.

How do I get the results of my FIT?

The result of your test will be explained by the Health Screening Nurse during your follow-up appointment.

- If your FIT result is **negative**, you will be re-invited for screening in 2 years
 - If your FIT result is **positive**, you will be referred to the Gastroenterology Clinic for further assessment.
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What is the purpose of the FIT?

The FIT detects the presence of blood in your stool sample. If blood is detected, the result is positive. However, this does not necessarily mean you have colorectal cancer, as other conditions such as haemorrhoids, polyps, or inflammation of the colon can also cause blood in stool. However, a positive result requires further investigation, usually through a colonoscopy, to determine the cause.

A negative result means no blood was detected at the time. However, it does not guarantee you do not have or will never develop colorectal cancer, as some bowel cancers may not bleed or only bleed inconsistently. Rescreening with FIT every two years is recommended if you have a negative result.

In some cases, the FIT result may be reported as invalid, meaning you are required to submit another sample for retesting.

What does it mean if I have a positive FIT result?

A positive FIT result means that blood was detected in your stool. Further testing, such as a colonoscopy will be required to identify the cause.

- The FIT cannot distinguish between blood caused by colorectal cancer and from other sources (e.g. bleeding from haemorrhoids).
- A positive result indicates you have colorectal cancer, even if no one else in your family has had the disease or if you feel healthy.
- A new positive result, even after previous negative tests, means something has changed and must be investigated.

During your follow-up appointment, the health screening nurse will explain your results and refer you to the Gastroenterology Clinic for consultation.

How accurate is the FIT result?

No screening test is 100% accurate. There is a chance that FIT may miss a pre-cancerous polyp or cancer if it is not actively bleeding at the time of the test. As such, regular screening gives you the best chance for early detection of colorectal cancer, when treatment is more likely to be more effective.

Is colonoscopy safe?

Colonoscopy is generally a safe procedure. However, complications may occasionally occur such as:

- Dizziness, nausea or vomiting
- Headache
- Reaction to sedatives
- Bleeding
- Perforation of the bowel (very rare, occurring in less than 1 in 1,000 cases)

What if I have other inquiries about this programme?

If you have further questions, please email health.screening@moh.gov.bn. We will respond to your inquiries the soonest possible.