

American Cancer Society Recommendations:

- People at average risk of colorectal cancer should start regular screening at age **45**
- People who are in good health and with a life expectancy of more than 10 years should continue regular colorectal cancer screening through the age of 75
- People ages 76-85 should make a decision with their medical provider about whether to be screened, based on their own person preferences, life expectancy, overall health, and prior screening history.
- People over age 85 should no longer get colorectal cancer screening

Individuals who may not be a candidate for a traditional colonoscopy may be a candidate for a virtual colonoscopy.

You may be wondering “what is a virtual colonoscopy?”

Virtual colonoscopy is a non-invasive procedure which uses CT scanning to obtain an interior view of the colon (large intestine). There are many benefits to virtual colonoscopy:

- The exam is completed in about 15 minutes – much less time than necessary for a conventional colonoscopy or a lower GI series.
- Patients do not need to be sedated; therefore, sedation-related risks are eliminated. Patients are able to drive themselves home or to work and may resume normal activities immediately following the procedure.
- Virtual colonoscopy is less costly than conventional colonoscopy. A little known fact is that most Maryland insurance carriers cover virtual colonoscopy.
- Virtual colonoscopy is an excellent alternative for patients who may be on blood thinning medications, have breathing issues and for those who may be obese. Also, if conventional colonoscopy cannot reach the full length of the colon (which occurs up to 10 percent of the time) virtual colonography can be performed on the same day because the colon has already been cleansed.
- Traditional colonoscopy requires the insertion of a 5 foot long scope into the patient’s rectum; virtual colonoscopy requires the insertion of a 1 inch catheter to allow for the introduction of carbon dioxide to inflate the colon.
- Virtual colonoscopy visualizes 100% of the interior and exterior colon. Traditional colonoscopy typically visualizes only 80% of the interior colon, as it is unable to see

behind colon folds, where polyps may hide. Virtual colonoscopy allows for the examination of the other organs of the abdomen and pelvis.

- Virtual colonoscopy provides clearer, more detailed images than a conventional x-ray using a barium enema – sometimes called a lower GI series.
- If the intestinal area is smaller or narrowed, a virtual colonoscopy can view the area inside the colon.

As with traditional colonoscopy it is important to clean out your colon prior to testing; however, our patients have said that the virtual colonoscopy prep is shorter and easier. They also report that bloating is not a problem.

Colon cancer is the third most commonly diagnosed, and second most deadly, form of cancer in the United States. Only about 30 percent of people who should be screened have actually been screened. Many forgo screening because of convenience, cost, availability and embarrassment. This is unfortunate as colorectal cancer should be a largely preventable illness. Experts believe that over 90% of all colorectal cancers can be cured through early detection and treatment.

Beginning at age 45 everyone should be screened every 7 to 10 years. Individuals at increased risk or with a family history of colon cancer may need to begin screening at age 40 or younger and may need to be screened more often. Risk factors for the disease include a history of polyps, a family history of colon cancer, or the presence of blood in the stool. For these patients conventional colonoscopy may be a more appropriate screening choice.

It is our goal at Peninsula Imaging to help our colleagues in the diagnosis of colorectal cancer so that more lives may be saved. We are pleased to be able to provide this service to our neighbors and community.

For more information or to schedule your virtual colonoscopy, please contact:



www.peninsulaimaging.com

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