



# Cancer Screening AND Early Detection

## Why is cancer screening important?

Cancer affects people of all ages and races, regardless of health status. Scheduling and receiving regular cancer screenings is the single best way to detect cancer in its early stages and, ultimately, receive the most effective treatment.

## What are the recommended screening guidelines for early cancer detection?

The American Cancer Society recommends the following screening guidelines for the early detection of cancer in patients who have no symptoms and have not previously been diagnosed with a cancerous condition. Cancer check-ups should begin for patients at age 20.

### Breast

A monthly breast self-examination is highly encouraged after the age of 20 years. Women should be familiar with their breasts on a continuous basis, and report any abnormal changes immediately to their healthcare provider. A healthcare provider should perform a clinical breast exam every three years, up to the age of 40, and yearly thereafter. Mammograms are also recommended to be started at the age of 40 and repeated on a yearly basis.

### Cervix

Screening should be initiated three years after a woman begins having vaginal intercourse and no later than age 21. The Pap test (Pap smear) is currently the test utilized for detecting changes in the cells from the vagina and cervix (lower part of the uterus). This test is obtained during a regular pelvic exam and is recommended every year or every other year, depending upon which type of Pap test is used. Screening may be reduced to every two or three years after the age of 30 if the patient has had at least three normal Pap tests in a row. At age 70, the patient may discuss the option to discontinue screening if there is an established history of normal Pap tests.

### Endometrium

At the time of menopause, women should know about the risks and symptoms of endometrial cancer and should report any unexpected vaginal bleeding or spotting to their healthcare provider. A yearly endometrial biopsy (tissue sample taken from inside the uterus) should be performed starting at age 35 for women with or at risk for hereditary nonpolyposis colon cancer (an inherited condition increasing a person's risk for developing colorectal cancer, endometrial cancer and others).

### Prostate

Men should undergo prostate cancer screening at the age of 50. Screening involves a yearly digital rectal exam and a blood test called the prostate-specific antigen or PSA. Patients who have an increased risk for developing prostate cancer (African American males and/or men with a strong family history of prostate cancer) should begin screening at age 45.

### Colon and Rectum

Screening is necessary in men and women beginning at age 50. A yearly examination of fecal (stool) samples, in addition to a visual examination of the lower colon every five years, is currently the preferred method for colorectal cancer screening. Patients who may be at a higher than average risk of colorectal cancer may undergo a different testing schedule.

## What else should I know?

Patients who have a history of cancer or are at a higher than average risk for developing cancer may require more frequent and/or earlier screening. Patients should discuss the potential risk factors for cancer with their healthcare provider to develop an appropriate and individualized screening schedule. Additional information can also be obtained from the American Cancer Society website at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

*For more information, ask your pharmacist!*

*This information provided by the Michigan Pharmacists Association and:*

