

## BACKDOOR READING FROM YOUR PARISH NURSE



### Colonoscopy Isn't the Only Way To Prevent Colon Cancer

Colonoscopy has generally been considered the gold standard for detecting and preventing colorectal cancer. But it's not the only option. A hand full of other drugs—which are easier, cheaper and quicker—are now available and may encourage more people to actually get tested.

*What you need to know...* The American Cancer Society (ACS) and other major health groups have urged Americans to regularly undergo colonoscopy. It can detect more than 90% of cancers and precancerous polyps that are larger than about one half inch.

The problem is, more than one third of Americans who should be screened for colorectal cancer haven't had screening—in part due to the onerous “prep” that includes fasting and drinking quarts of a foul-tasting liquid and often

The ACS advise patients with average risk for colon cancer (that is no family history, genetic syndrome, inflammatory bowel disease or personal history of radiation to the abdomen or pelvic area to treat a prior cancer) to undergo regular screenings starting at age 45. Previously, screening started at age 50, but the age has been dropped to 45 because in recent years the percentage of colorectal cancer involving younger adults has risen.

Colonoscopy is most effective at detecting precancerous polyps, but for people who won't go for the procedure, stool based tests (when performed regularly) can be almost as accurate as colonoscopy at detecting colon cancer.

If you test positive on one of the newer tests, you'll need to follow up with colonoscopy. And the test must be repeated every one to five years, depending on the test. Colonoscopy is typically performed every

Ten years (more frequently if polyps are detected).

Other tests to discuss with your doctor...

- Guaiac fecal occult blood test (gFOBT). Test uses a chemical to detect a blood component in stools. The presence of blood is a common sign of cancer. Detects 60-80%
- Fecal immunochemical test (FIT) Uses an antibody to detect. 80% effective.
- Cologuard—Newest test with ability to detect DNA mutations often associated with colorectal cancers. Can detect about 92% of cancers. Costs about \$650.
- Sigmoidoscopy—uses flexible camera to examine the lower part of the colon. Repeated every five years.



Source: Bottom Line Health

*Happy St. Patrick's Day*