

## COLON CANCER PREVENTION PROGRAM

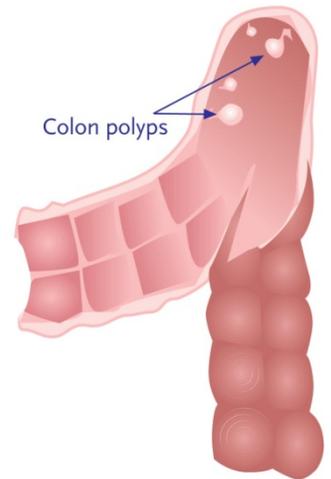
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### Fact Sheet: Colon Cancer - Prevention and Screening

#### Colon Cancer

- Colon cancer starts as a small non-cancerous growth or polyp in your colon (large intestine). Over time, some of these polyps can turn into cancer.
- The greatest risk for colon cancer is your age. Most people found to have colon cancer are over 50 years old.
- Colon cancer often doesn't have any warning signs when it is just starting to grow. However, possible signs or symptoms of colon cancer may include:
  - Rectal bleeding or any sign of blood after bowel movements
  - Lasting change in bowel habits such as:
    - diarrhea or constipation for more than a few weeks
    - stools that are consistently more narrow than usual
    - the feeling that you aren't completely emptying your bowel
  - Unexplained weight loss, tiredness, or exhaustion
- If you have any of these warning signs or concerns about colon cancer, talk to a doctor or nurse.



#### The Colon Cancer Home Screening Test

- Over time, most pre-cancerous growths leak tiny amounts of blood into the bowel. The home screening test looks for these small amounts of blood hidden in the stool (bowel movement, feces, poop).
- Using a [home screening test](#) can help prevent colon cancer, or find it at an early stage when it can be cured.
- This test can find polyps early, and a doctor can remove them before cancer has a chance to develop.
- All Nova Scotians, who are between 50 and 74 years old and are registered with MSI (have a Nova Scotia Health Card), will automatically get a home screening test in the mail every two years.
- The test is easy to do in your own home and there are no dietary restrictions.
- **Do not wait until you have warning signs or symptoms to take the test – it may be too late!** Colon cancer screening works best when you take the test when you are feeling good - **before** you have any symptoms or warning signs.
- It is not enough to do the test once. You need to do a home screening test every two years.

#### You can lower your risk for colon cancer by:

- ✓ Getting checked every two years
- ✓ Eating a healthy diet high in fruits & vegetables
- ✓ Keeping a healthy weight
- ✓ Exercising
- ✓ Limiting the amount of alcohol you drink
- ✓ Taking vitamin D supplement

If you have questions call 1-866-599-2267.