



## What is the Difference between a screening colonoscopy and a diagnostic colonoscopy?

A **screening colonoscopy** is performed when someone does not have any signs or symptoms. It is based on age (typically starting at age 45), gender, medical history, and family history according to medical guidelines.

A **diagnostic colonoscopy** is performed when someone has a sign or symptom, to look for the cause. A patient with rectal bleeding and low blood counts who has a colonoscopy would have a diagnostic colonoscopy.

- If cancer or a polyp were to be found and biopsied or removed during the colonoscopy, it would be a diagnostic colonoscopy.
- Testing to rule out or confirm a suspected diagnosis because the patient has some sign or symptom, makes the test a diagnostic examination. A colonoscopy for bright red blood in the stool, black tarry stools, or abdominal pain would make the colonoscopy diagnostic.
- If a patient has ever had colon polyps, a personal history of colon cancer, or a family history of colon cancer, they would have a diagnostic colonoscopy.

Here are signs and symptoms which **might** be warning signs of colorectal cancer:

- Bloody or black stools; rectal bleeding
- A change in bowel habits like new diarrhea or constipation
- Abdominal pain or cramping in lower abdomen
- Decreased appetite or unintended weight loss
- Weakness and fatigue

If you experience any of these, you should see your healthcare provider and undergo a work-up. This would be a diagnostic colonoscopy.

Please contact your insurance company to discuss specific plan coverage.