



Colorectal cancer screening

for men and women aged 60 to 69



Cancer Society of Finland

Invitation

What is this about?

Colorectal cancer refers to cancer of the large intestine or rectum. Every year in Finland 2,500 new cases are diagnosed and the disease causes 1,000 deaths. Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer in Finland, preceded only by prostate and breast cancers.

The aim of the screening is to reduce mortality from colorectal cancer. At an early stage a colorectal tumour causes minor bleeding which cannot be seen with the naked eye. The purpose of the screening is to check for this hidden blood in the stool sample. The screening has been shown to prevent every fifth colorectal cancer death.

Finland's screening programme was launched in autumn 2004 and it is a part of municipal health care services. The test is free of charge for the target group. The screening invitation is renewed every second year.



*There is no greater
fortune than health
and no greater joy
than the joy
of the heart.*

Why?

Screening for people aged 60 to 69

Eight out of ten people who get colorectal cancer are over the age of sixty. Most of the new cases of cancer are diagnosed in the age group of 70 to 79, at which point the cancer often has already spread. By targeting the screening to men and women aged 60 to 69 the cancer can be detected when it is still treatable.

Unnoticeable at first

The early symptoms of colorectal cancer are often indeterminate or completely absent. In the screening the cancer can be diagnosed at an early stage or even before any symptoms appear.

You should see a doctor if you are experiencing the following symptoms:

- blood in your stools
- mucous or scanty stools albeit there has been no changes in your eating habits
- disturbances in your bowel habits
- swelling or pain in your abdomen
- unexplained tiredness

How?

The screening test is taken at home

Test cards and step-by-step instructions are sent to the men and women who are eligible for the screening. The screening centre examines the samples and sends back the results.

What does occult blood in stool mean?

Blood is found in about two tests out of a hundred. In most cases the blood is caused by reasons other than cancer, such as haemorrhoids, inflammations or benign tumours. Sometimes blood from dishes containing meat or blood can show up in the test.

If blood is found, a written notice will be sent to your home address and to your municipal health centre. The health centre will organise necessary further examinations which are charged as clinic or health centre fees according to municipal practices.

Further examinations

Usually the cause of the bleeding is determined by colonoscopy. The colon must be completely empty prior to this procedure. The health centre provides you with instructions on how to prepare yourself for the examination. Colonoscopy is performed with a flexible tube, and during the examination the doctor can take biopsies and remove small tumours. Colonoscopy takes about 20 to 40 minutes and you can go home as soon as the test is over.

Contact Details

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National screening centre

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Collecting the screening information

Data concerning screening is registered at the Mass Screening Registry as confidential and data protection is strictly followed according to regulations in Finland. The screening centre will store information on behalf of municipalities.

The screening centre is located at Pirkanmaa Cancer Society in Tampere. Free counselling is offered to participants on Cancer contact at the Cancer Society of Finland and the screening centre also answers questions on the phone.

Colorectal cancer screening is offered as service screening to the target population. The programme is centrally designed and organised by the Cancer Society of Finland, together with the Mass Screening Registry and Pirkanmaa Cancer Society in Tampere where the national screening centre is located.

Free cancer counselling, Cancer contact
0800 19414

Mon to Fri 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Mon 4 a.m. to 6 p.m.

neuvonta@cancer.fi

Information packet on colorectal cancer:
www.cancer.fi/tietoasyovasta/syopataudit/suolistosyovat/



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