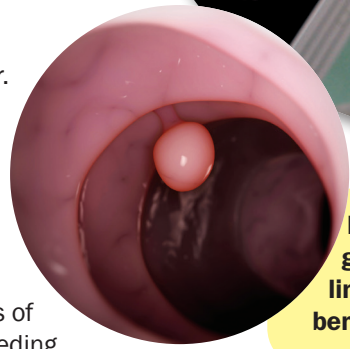




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# Colorectal Cancer Screening



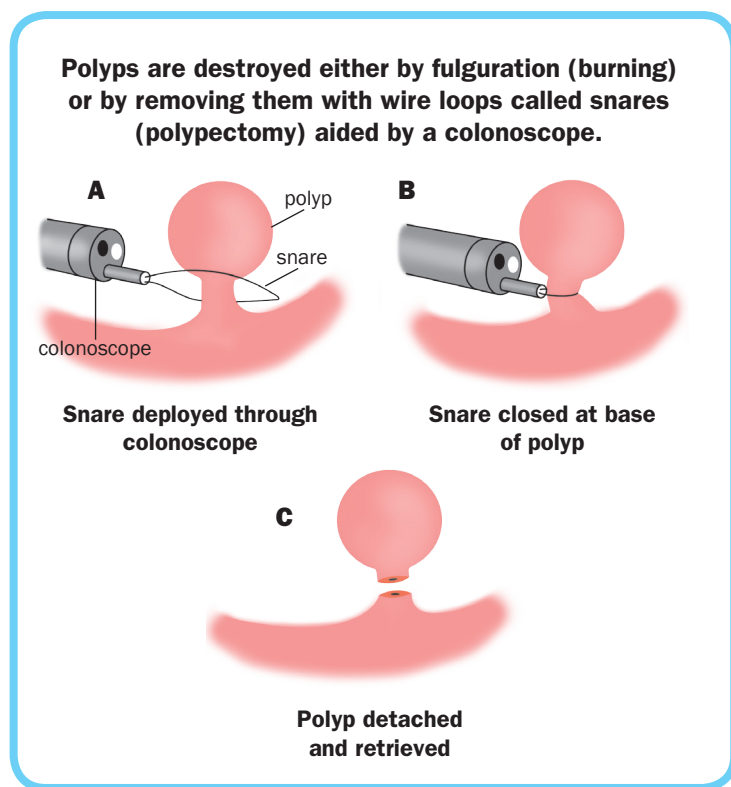
**Polyps are abnormal growths in the colon lining that are usually benign (noncancerous).**

Routine colorectal cancer screening should occur in people between the ages of 50 and 75. Those with an increased risk because of family history of colorectal cancer should start screening even before that and have more frequent screening.

## Screening Early

Note that most colorectal cancers develop from polyps and its preemptive removal can prevent the onset of colorectal cancer. However, early cancer can have no outward symptoms. Therefore regular screening is paramount.

**Colonoscopy** – It's a health test which allows doctors to probe into your large intestines (colon and rectum) using a device known as a colonoscope – which is essentially a tiny microscopic camera attached to thin, flexible tubing – for signs of ulcers, colon polyps, tumors, and areas of inflammation or bleeding. Colonoscopy is also used to remove the polyps once they're positively identified and located. Similarly one could opt to use the flexible sigmoidoscopy test, which is basically the same as colonoscopy minus the range of observation – you can only look into the left side of the colon (sigmoid colon) thus the test may not be able to determine the condition of your intestines in entirety.



## Fecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT) –

Polyps and colorectal cancer usually bleed, as stool moves along the large intestines it is smeared with the blood. The test is able to detect traces of blood in the stool. You can get a FOBT do-it-yourself kit from any government or private hospital or clinic. FOBT allows you to screen for signs of colorectal cancer in the relative comfort of your own home, just remember to send them back for proper laboratory processing.

The survival rate of colorectal cancer can be as high as 90% if the disease is detected early, which is quite high. You could also talk to your health care provider about when to begin screening, what test(s) to have, the advantages and disadvantages (including potential harms) of each test, and how often to undergo screening – stay informed.

*Dato' Dr Muhammad Radzi Abu Hassan is a consultant gastroenterologist and chairman of the Digestive Health Advisory Board. The author is not associated with and does not endorse any brands or products. For a free digestive health info guide or more information, please contact 03-5632 3301.*