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Questions to Ask Your Doctor about Cancer Screening

Screening tests are used to find cancer in people who have no symptoms. Screening increases the chances of finding certain cancers early, when they are small, have not spread, and might be easier to treat.

You might be getting to, or you might be at, the age when you need to start screening. You might even be overdue for your screening tests because of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, many elective medical procedures, including screening tests, were put on hold, and this led to fewer people getting screened for cancer.

As you think about starting your screenings or getting your screening tests back on track, here are some questions you can ask your doctor:

- What cancer screening tests are recommended for someone my age?
- How often should I get the screening tests?
- Do I need to see any specialists to get my screening tests done, or can you order all of them?
- Which of the screening tests should I get first?
- Do I have to get screened right away or can I wait?
- How long can I wait to schedule my screening tests?
- If I canceled or postponed a screening appointment, when should I reschedule?
- Is it harmful, if I missed my regular screening test?
- Is it safe to get screened now?
- Where can I go to get screened?
- What precautions are being taken by the facility to help reduce the spread of COVID-19?
- What are the risks and benefits of getting screened now compared to putting it off

until later, given my personal and family history, risk factors, and when I got my last screening test?

- Are there screening tests that I can do at home?
- How do I schedule my screening tests?
- Can someone help me schedule my screening tests?
- Will my screening tests be covered by my health insurance?
- What will the screening tests cost if they are not covered by insurance?
- When will I get the results of my screening test and who will give me the results?
- Do I need to come back and see you at another appointment to find out the results?
- What happens if my results show possible signs of cancer?

These are examples to help you come up with your own questions about starting or returning to regular cancer screening as soon as possible. At the same time, it's important to remember that if you have signs or symptoms of cancer, or if you have additional risk factors that put you in a high-risk group, you should talk to your doctor or a health provider as soon as possible.

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