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How much is a cologuard test

Key takeaways:Colon cancer screening can detect precancerous polyps, which can develop into cancer over time, as well as early cancers. These tests can save your life.Cologuard, a popular at-home screening option, is covered by Medicare, Medicare Advantage, and Medicaid as well as many private insurance plans.At-home colon cancer tests can be obtained over the counter, online, or from your healthcare provider.fizkes/iStock via Getty ImagesColorectal cancer is an overgrowth of cells in the colon and rectum, which make up the large intestine. Colorectal cancer is also called colon cancer. Colorectal cancer is the second-most common cause of cancer-related death in the U.S. While new colon cancer cases and death rates have been declining overall, they have increased for people under age 50.Colon cancer screening is important. Screening can detect blood in the stool and other signs that could be cancer. Earlier detection also can result in more successful treatment.The Affordable Care Act requires insurance plans to cover colon cancer screening as a preventive health benefit at no cost to people ages 45 to 75.The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) and the American Cancer Society recommend starting colon cancer screening at age 45 for people at average risk. The USPSTF recommends that regular screenings continue until age 75.If you have an increased risk of colon cancer, you may need to begin screening earlier than age 45. Risk factors include a family history of colorectal cancer and inflammatory bowel disease. It's important to note that inflammatory bowel syndrome (IBS). IBS is not a risk factor for colon cancer.A colonoscopy offers the most accurate colon cancer screening, but this isn't your only option. There are several at-home screening tests available. Some can be found over the counter and online, while others are available from your doctor.When you use an at-home colon cancer screening, you should be aware of coverage and costs. If your test is positive, your health insurance may or may not cover your follow-up colonoscopy because the home test counted as your screening. Some states have laws that require plans to cover follow-up colonoscopies at no out-of-pocket cost to you. A follow-up colonoscopy after a home test could be considered a diagnostic procedure, which may trigger your deductible, copay or coinsurance.What are some options for at-home colon cancer screening?There are several at-home colon cancer screenings kits. All use a sample of your stool (or poop). Some at-home tests are available over the counter or online without a prescription. Others require a prescription or must be obtained by your healthcare provider. You send them back to a lab according to the instructions.There are three types of at-home colon cancer tests:Guaiac fecal occult blood test: Also known as gFOBT or FOBT, this test uses a chemical called guaiac to detect blood in the stool that may not be visible to the naked eye. The test requires you to collect a small stool sample for three different bowel movements. You use a stick or swab provided in the test kit to take a small sample of each stool and apply it to a test card. The test will have directions and materials for sample collection. You need to stop certain medications (including NSAIDs), vitamin C supplements, and some foods a few days before the test. Taking or eating certain foods and medications can cause false positive or false negative results.Fecal immunochemical test: Known as FIT, this test is very similar to the gFOBT but only needs one small stool sample. This test uses antibodies to detect irregularities in the stool that could be signs of cancer, including the presence of blood. FIT is used more often than gFOBT because it has better accuracy and is easier to use.Stool DNA test: This test uses stool to detect the DNA of cancerous and precancerous cells that shed in fecal matter. This requires a whole stool sample but you won't need to stop medications or food prior to use. The test also checks for blood in the form of hemoglobin (a protein in red blood cells).How much is the cost of at-home colon cancer screening without insurance?There are several popular brands of at-home colon cancer tests. Here are some options with their cash prices:Cologuard: The cost for the test ranges from $581 to $681, depending on when you pay. A call to the toll-free number, 844-870-8870, can get you a $100 discount if you pay in full upfront. Otherwise, the cash price is $681 at the time of this article's publishing. A Cologuard test requires a prescription from your doctor. This may add to the total cost if you have out-of-pocket expenses for that visit. If you don't have a provider, you can contact Cologuard's telemedicine provider for a consultation and prescription for a $30 fee (if the test is right for you). This stool DNA test is for people ages 45 and older who are at average risk for colon cancer. Shipping both ways is included in the price. After you return your kit, test results are sent to your healthcare or telemedicine provider within 2 weeks.Everlywell: The cost is $49 without a membership. This is a FIT for people 45 and older and is available online and at retail pharmacies including Target, Walgreens, CVS, and Rite Aid. You may be able to get a discount by purchasing online at the company's site. No food or medication changes are needed. Shipping both ways is included in the price. You can pay for this test with your health savings account (HSA) or flexible spending account (FSA). You will receive your results "within days," according to the company.Let'sGetChecked: The cost is $69 for a one-time purchase. This is a FIT available online. This test requires a stool from a fasted state (no food) before 9 AM and mailed immediately. Samples should not be taken or mailed on Friday, Saturday, or Sunday. Results are available online in 2 to 5 days. Shipping both ways is included in the price. You can pay for this test with your health savings account (HSA) or flexible spending account (FSA). Health insurance is not accepted.Pinnacle BioLabs: The cost is $24.99 for 1 test and $29.99 for 2 tests. This FIT has no diet or medication restrictions. You receive results at home in 5 minutes. This test is available through online retailers and at retail pharmacies including CVS and Kinney Drugs. You may be able to get a discount by purchasing online at the company's site.Pixel: The cost is $89. This is a FIT offered by LabCorp. Test kits are available for online purchase only. The kit is for people ages 18 and older and requires no special preparation for use. No doctor visit is required. Kits ship in 1 or 2 days. Shipping both ways is included in the price. Results can be accessed online. You can pay for this test with your health savings account (HSA) or flexible spending account (FSA).Does private insurance cover at-home colon cancer screening?The Affordable Care Act requires insurance plans to cover colon cancer screening as a preventive health benefit at no cost to people ages 45 to 75.Most at-home colon cancer screening tests are not covered by private insurance. Many private health insurance companies will cover costs associated with the Cologuard at-home test. Contact your health insurance company for specific information about coverage for Cologuard.Does Medicare cover at-home colon cancer screening?Medicare Part B began covering the cost of at-home multitarget stool DNA tests in 2014. The decision specifically named the Cologuard test. The tests are covered every 3 years with no copay or deductible for eligible enrollees who:Are age 50 to 85Have no signs or symptoms of diseaseHave an average risk of developing colorectal cancerMedicare Advantage plans will cover Cologuard costs, too.Does Medicaid cover at-home colon cancer screening?Usually. Most eligible Medicaid enrollees can access Cologuard with no out-of-pocket costs — unless your plan requires a copay.Can my costs for colon cancer screening increase after taking an at-home test?Yes. If your test is positive, you may need a follow-up colonoscopy. Without insurance, a colonoscopy can cost more than $1,000. Even with insurance, your plan may not cover your follow-up colonoscopy because the home test counted as your screening. Some state laws require plans to cover follow-up colonoscopies at no out-of-pocket cost to you. A follow-up colonoscopy after a home test could be considered a diagnostic procedure, which may trigger your deductible, copay, or coinsurance. Contact your insurance company ahead of time about potential out-of-pocket costs.Written by:Monique M. JohnsonMonique M. Johnson is a freelance writer based in Boston. Her work has been featured in Real Simple, Patch.com, and Today.com.Edited by:Cindy George, MPHCindy George is the senior personal finance editor at GoodRx. She is an endlessly curious health journalist and digital storyteller.Reviewed by:Patricia Pinto-Garcia, MD, MPHPatricia Pinto-Garcia, MD, MPH, is a medical editor at GoodRx. She is a licensed, board-certified pediatrician with more than a decade of experience in academic medicine.Our editorial standardsMeet our expertsGet the facts on Colorectal Cancer.Sign up for our newsletter to get expert tips on condition management and prescription savings.By signing up, I agree to GoodRx's Terms and Privacy Policy, and to receive marketing messages from GoodRx. From learning how to order your use-at-home collection kit, to shipping your sample to our lab for testing — we're here to support you every step of the way. You've got questions, we've got answers. Visit our FAQ page for our most asked about topics. We're here to help, 24/7. Just give us a call at 1-844-870-8870. The Cologuard® and Cologuard Plus™ tests are intended to screen adults 45 years of age and older who are at average risk for colorectal cancer by detecting certain DNA markers and blood in the stool. Do not use if you have had adenomas, have inflammatory bowel disease and certain hereditary syndromes, or a personal or family history of colorectal cancer. The Cologuard products are not a replacement for colonoscopy in high risk patients. Cologuard results should be interpreted with caution. A positive test result does not confirm the presence of cancer. Patients with a positive test result should be referred for colonoscopy. A negative test result does not confirm the absence of cancer. Patients with a negative test result should discuss with their doctor when they need to be tested again. False positives and false negative results can occur. Rx only. Cologuard spends millions advertising its colon cancer screening product, but it's impossible for patients to get all the information they need in a TV commercial. A It's true that it offers the benefits of comfort and convenience, but the Cologuard test is not recommended by GCSA physicians as a replacement for a colonoscopy. Colon cancer claims over 50,000 lives every year and is the 2nd most common cause of cancer death in the US. Colon cancer is preventable, treatable, and beatable – but only with early and accurate detection. Any colon cancer screening is better than no screening, but patients should know the pros and cons before making a final decision. What is a Screening Test? Screening tests are done to detect potential problems in people who do not have any symptoms of disease. The goal of screening is to provide early detection, reduce the risk of disease, and treat the condition more effectively. For colon cancer, in particular, finding and removing polyps can actually prevent cancer from forming. Polyps are small lumps of tissue in the colon and rectum that may turn into cancer over time. Types of Colorectal Cancer (CRC) Screening Because colon cancer begins as growths called polyps, finding and removing polyps is the best way to prevent colon cancer. A There are three types of CRC screening: Colonoscopy – 95% of large polyps detected Stool DNA (Cologuard Test) – 42% of large polyps detected Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) – 24% of large polyps detected Colonoscopy is the gold standard for finding polyps. If polyps are found during a colonoscopy, they are removed during the same single procedure. A This eliminates the need for additional procedures or tests. If polyps are found through FIT or a Cologuard test, a colonoscopy must be performed to remove the polyps. Unfortunately, the majority of large polyps go undetected with stool-based tests. A When polyps aren't found and removed, it increases the risk of developing colon cancer. Cologuard Test: Detection Not Prevention The Cologuard test is designed to detect cancer not prevent it. A It can only detect 42% of large polyps, while a colonoscopy can detect 95% of large polyps. When polyps are detected during a colonoscopy, they are removed at the same time. A If polyps are detected with a stool test, a colonoscopy must be performed to remove them. The majority of large precancerous polyps cannot be detected with Cologuard. A This may give patients a false sense that they are preventing colon cancer by taking the test, when in fact they may already have cancer and not know it. Save Time & Money If you have a high risk of colorectal cancer, which includes: a family history of colon cancer present symptoms previous colonoscopy finding of polyps You should skip the Cologuard test. This will save you time, money, and the frustration of undergoing both tests since a colonoscopy is needed for high-risk patients. Plus, if Cologuard results are positive, you'll need a colonoscopy anyway. If your primary care provider recommends a stool test, and you are at high risk, you should consult with a specialist before undergoing the test. How does the Cologuard test work? The Cologuard test is a less reliable stool DNA test that looks for microscopic blood in the stool and altered DNA. A It's performed using an at-home kit that includes a container for a stool sample. That sample is then shipped to a lab for testing. Is Cologuard accurate? Cologuard can detect 92% of cancers but only 42% of large precancerous polyps. In other words, no, it is not accurate, especially when it comes to preventing cancer by detecting polyps. While it is better at detecting cancer than FIT (74% vs 92% for FIT test vs Cologuard), the false positive rate is higher.A The Cologuard false-positive rate is 13%, and that rate increases as people age. Cologuard is less accurate than a colonoscopy at detecting polyps of any size. A A colonoscopy can detect 95% of large polyps. When polyps are detected during a colonoscopy, they are removed at the same time. A However, the detection of large polyps (the precursors to colon cancer) is less than half as accurate as a colonoscopy. Is the Cologuard test as effective as a colonoscopy? No, it is not as effective as a colonoscopy. A Detecting and removing polyps is critical to colon cancer prevention, and the test only detects large precancerous polyps 42% of the time. A A colonoscopy detects the same polyps 95% of the time and they are removed during the same procedure. What does a positive Cologuard test mean? If you have a positive test, it may mean that colon cancer or polyps are present. After a positive Cologuard test, a colonoscopy is required for a definitive answer. A The Cologuard false positive rate is 13%, which means 1 in 10 positive tests will incorrectly identify cancer or polyps. Can Cologuard detect cancer? Yes, the Cologuard test can detect cancer 92% of the time. A However, prevention of colon cancer is better than identifying it once you have it. A The best way to prevent colon cancer is by identifying and removing precancerous polyps that don't turn into cancer later. A Cologuard only finds 42% of large, dangerous polyps that can turn into colon cancer. Can I use Cologuard instead of a colonoscopy? Cologuard is not designed to be a replacement for a colonoscopy, even though advertisements may suggest otherwise. A 58% of the time, dangerous precancerous polyps are not detected with the test, which is significantly less effective than a colonoscopy. However, it may be an option for some patients who insist on not getting a colonoscopy or those not healthy enough to have a colonoscopy. A Even a 42% chance of detection is better than no detection at all. How long is Cologuard good for? This particular test should be done every three years rather than annually due to the higher cost and false-positive rates compared to an annual FIT. A More research is needed to determine how often the test should be done. What is the false positive rate of Cologuard? The false-positive rate for Cologuard is 13% or a little over 1 in 10. Is a stool sample as good as a colonoscopy? FIT and Cologuard tests performed using stool samples are not as effective at identifying the large precancerous polyps that lead to colon cancer. FIT and Cologuard tests are even more effective than doing no testing at all. How accurate is stool test for colon cancer? There are two types of stool tests for colon cancer? Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) and Stool DNA (Cologuard). A FIT detects 74% of colon cancers and 24% of large colorectal polyps. Stool DNA detects 92% of cancers and 42% of large colorectal polyps. How much does Cologuard cost? The cost is around $500.A Some insurance plans may cover part of that cost depending on your plan, co-pay, and deductible. A Diagnostic testing is subject to deductibles and coinsurance. Screening colonoscopies are not subject to copays and deductibles and usually have no out-of-pocket costs for patients. Is Cologuard Cost Effective? A recent study looked at the effectiveness and cost of different colon cancer screening options and the results were clear: Cologuard was less effective and more expensive than other screening options. What can Cologuard detect? The test can detect 92% of cancers and 42% of large precancerous polyps, the precursor to colon cancer. Who is Cologuard good for? Cologuard may be an option for patients who insist on not having a colonoscopy or who are not healthy enough for the procedure. A Some patients may decide that the risks associated with a colonoscopy outweigh the benefits of increased detection. Any test for colon cancer is better than no test at all. A If the test is positive, a colonoscopy will be necessary. What are common misspellings of Cologuard? Collguard, Cholegard, and Colorguard are common misspellings. Request Appointment Sources: American Society of Gastroenterologists and Cologuard.com Related: If you've discussed the Cologuard test with your health care provider in the past and believe it may have been ordered for you, please call Exact Sciences Laboratories at 1-844-870-8870 Telehealth may be offered by your healthcare provider. *Telehealth providers may charge a fee for their services associated with an optional post-test consultation. Telehealth providers operate independently from Exact Sciences and Exact Sciences Laboratories. Only orders from licensed health care providers are accepted. When it comes to our health, knowledge is power—especially regarding screening for conditions like colorectal cancer. You might have heard about Cologuard, a non-invasive test that uses stool DNA to detect early signs of cancer and precancerous polyps. But how accurate is Cologuard? If you're considering this test, you're likely wondering, "Is it reliable?" Let's dive into the latest insights from 2024 studies and what they mean for you. In this article, we'll explore everything you need to know about Cologuard's accuracy, its role in colorectal cancer screening, and how it stacks up against traditional methods like colonoscopy. So, grab a cup of your favorite beverage, and let's unpack the details together! Cologuard is a Stool DNA testing method that detects the presence of certain markers associated with colorectal cancer and advanced adenomas. If you've ever thought about screening options, it's essential to understand that this test is designed to help individuals at average risk for colon cancer, typically those aged 45 and older, as per the American Cancer Society guidelines. How does it work? You collect a stool sample at home and send it to a laboratory for analysis. The 2024 studies show that Cologuard performs particularly well in detecting cancers—especially early-stage cancer—helping many individuals catch potential issues before they escalate. Understanding your individual risk for colorectal cancer based on factors like family history and lifestyle can guide your decision on screening methods. However, always consult your primary care provider about your specific risk factors and recommended screening options. The question on everyone's mind is: "How effective is Cologuard?" This brings us to the comparison between Cologuard and traditional colon cancer screenings, particularly colonoscopy. While colonoscopy is often the gold standard for detecting colorectal cancer, it's also invasive and requires preparation. Cologuard, on the other hand, is non-invasive and convenient. However, this convenience brings up the important topic of accuracy. According to the 2024 studies, Cologuard has an overall sensitivity of about 92% for detecting colorectal cancer but has a false-positive rate of 13%. This means some patients may receive a positive result when cancer is not present, leading to unnecessary anxiety and follow-up procedures. To break it down further: Sensitivity: Measures how well the test detects those with the disease. For Cologuard, this number is relatively high. Specificity: Measures how well the test identifies those without the disease. Cologuard's specificity is around 87%, meaning it may not always be able to correctly identify people who don't have cancer.

Metric	Cologuard	Colonoscopy
Sensitivity for Cancer	92%	Up to 95%
False Positive Rate	13%	