



Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT): common questions

What is a FIT?

FIT (Fecal Immunochemical Test) is a stool test used to look for possible signs of colorectal cancer. This test is able to look for a specific type of blood in your stool which helps identify if you have any polyps (pre-cancerous growths) in your colon.

Why is a FIT done?

Stool tests are done to look for signs of cancer by testing for blood in your stool. Tissue or polyps with cancer are more likely to bleed than normal tissue so if there is blood in your stool then it could mean you need to have these removed. If cancer is found early, treatments are more effective.

FIT is a great stool test because it only looks for a specific type of blood related to signs of colon cancer. Other types of blood that may be in your digestive system from your diet (red meat) would not result in a positive FIT. This allows for the test to have a greater level of specificity for colon cancer screening than other types of stool tests.

How do I prepare for a FIT?

A FIT does not require any specific diet or medication preparation since it will only react to a specific type of blood. Do not do the stool tests during your menstrual period or if you have active bleeding from hemorrhoids.

How is it done?

You will receive your FIT kit either by mail or in person at a HealthPartners clinic. Once you have your kit, you will need to collect a stool sample for testing using the brush and test card found in your kit. Once complete, you can return the sample and information to the lab specified on your kit so your sample can be tested. Your results will then be sent to you in a letter or by online patient services.

Your FIT kit should include step-by-step instructions on how to complete the test. **Please refer to these instructions when completing your test.**

What does my result mean?

Once your test is complete, you will receive a result of one of the below:

Normal or Negative Results

- A normal or negative FIT result means that there was no blood found in your stool at the time of the test.
- If a stool test is negative, it does not always mean colorectal cancer or colon polyps are not present. That is because these tests can miss polyps and some cancers.
- Talk with your doctor about how often you should do a test. Depending on your age and any risk factors you may have for colorectal cancer, your doctor may recommend various time intervals between tests.

Abnormal or Positive Results

- An abnormal or positive FIT result means that there was blood in your stool at the time of the test.
- A colon polyp, a pre-cancerous polyp, or cancer can cause a positive stool test. With a positive test, there is a small chance that you have early-stage colorectal cancer.
- Most of the time, an abnormal stool test means that you will need to have a colonoscopy in order to further investigate the reason for blood in your stool. Talk with your doctor about what test you may need next.

Other things to think about

Stool tests can produce false positive and false negative results.

- A false positive test would occur when the test was positive but you do not have any signs of polyps or cancer. This happens approximately 25% of the time.
- This can be the result of other issues (such as inflammation or hemorrhoids) causing blood to be present in the stool.
- A false negative test would occur when the test was negative but you do have polyps or cancer. To ensure that we avoid false negative tests, you will be asked to take two samples each time. However, a stool test can still miss some polyps and cancers. Be sure to talk to your doctor if you have any concerns.