



CONTENTS

Web Exclusive: Guidance on Guidelines

BY LINDSAY RAY

Deciding to screen for any type of cancer can be a big decision. Several factors can play a role, including age, gender, and medical and family history. Fortunately, there are screening guidelines that can help the decision-making a little easier, but because not every institution and organization agrees on each recommendation, it's best to talk to your doctor about the screening tests you should use. Below are some resources that spell out screening guidelines in the United States for people at average risk for cancer.

The [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#) offers a list of current screening recommendations by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force.

The [American Cancer Society](#) lists its recommendations for screening for breast, colorectal, cervical, endometrial, and prostate cancers.

The [National Cancer Institute](#) offers information on different screening methods for various cancers, including whether or not they are recommended and their associated risks.

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There are many screening tests for different types of cancers; however, many are still under investigation to determine whether they, in fact, increase survival or offer more benefit than risk. Below are resources on screening information for some of the more common cancers.

Breast Cancer

[Breastcancer.org](#) provides a description and information on different breast tests, including screening, diagnostic, and monitoring tests. [Susan G. Komen for the Cure](#) has charts comparing recommendations from different organizations for average-risk and high-risk women.

Cervical Cancer

The [National Cervical Cancer Coalition](#) offers information on current guidelines and resources for more information.

Colorectal Cancer

The [Colon Cancer Alliance](#) includes descriptions for colorectal cancer screening tests. The [Colorectal Cancer Coalition](#) offers a chart to compare screening methods.

Lung Cancer

Lungcancer.org, a CancerCare program, offers descriptions of different types of screening methods, while the [Lung Cancer Alliance](#) gives its position on lung cancer screening.

Prostate Cancer

The [Prostate Cancer Foundation](#) offers information on prostate-specific antigen tests and digital rectal exams, as well as the current guidelines. [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) provides information on screening methods and the prostate cancer screening debate.

Skin Cancer

The [Skin Cancer Foundation](#) shows how to perform a skin self-exam.