Colonoscopy First

For primary care
Colon cancer screening from age 45

The 20-second version.

Patients who take a stool test first rarely reach a gastroenterologist. This is a way to offer colonoscopy that costs no more time than the kit, with a handoff that does the explaining for you.

What to say

> Both tests are recommended. Colonoscopy is the one that can find the polyps that turn into cancer and remove them in the same visit. The stool test finds fewer than half of the advanced ones, and a positive result means a colonoscopy anyway. If you can do the colonoscopy, that's my pick. This page explains it; come back to me with questions.

The facts behind it

1. **One round of Cologuard Plus found about 94 of 100 cancers and about 43 of 100 advanced precancers.**
   BLUE-C, New England Journal of Medicine, 2024. Funded by the manufacturer.

2. **About 1 in 15 negative results had advanced precancer at colonoscopy.**
   FDA review of Cologuard Plus, P230043.

3. **Colonoscopy can remove the polyps it finds during the same exam.**
   National Cancer Institute. Serious complications: about 3 perforations and 15 major bleeds per 10,000 screening exams (USPSTF evidence review, 2021).

4. **A colonoscopy after a positive stool test is screening, with no patient cost sharing.**
   Commercial plans and Medicare, under rules in force since 2023.

Sources and the full study reviews: colonoscopyfirst.org/evidence. Guidelines recommend several tests and do not rank them; "colonoscopy first" is this campaign's position for average-risk adults who are due, able and willing.

Hand this to the patient

colonoscopyfirst.org/colonoscopy-or-cologuard

The two-minute answer, with every source. It sends them back to you with a better question.

If they hesitate

"Then let's do the kit, and do it this week. If it's positive, we'll get the colonoscopy."

A kit returned beats a referral that never happens.

colonoscopyfirst.org/for-clinicians · Stephen Rudolph, MD, gastroenterologist.
Self-funded; no money from any test maker.

Print and post freely; keep the sources.
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