

# Colorectal cancer early detection with fecal occult blood test (FOBT)

Numbers for men and women aged 45 years and older who either did or did not participate in annual or biennial early detection (screening) with a fecal occult blood test over a period of 9 to 30 years.

	<b>1,000 people without screening</b>	<b>1,000 people with screening</b>
<b>Benefits</b>		
How many people died from colorectal cancer?	7	6
How many people were diagnosed with advanced colorectal cancer?*	10	9
<b>Harms</b>		
How many people without colorectal cancer experienced a false alarm and unnecessarily had follow-up testing (e.g., colonoscopy)?	–	12
How many people with colorectal cancer received a false-negative result?	–	6

\*Colorectal cancer may be prevented by the removal of potentially precancerous lesions (polyps) during colonoscopy screening.

**Short summary:** Early detection with fecal occult blood test reduced the number of people who died from colorectal cancer by 1 in every 1,000. However, some people without colorectal cancer experienced false alarms, that led to unnecessary follow-up tests such as colonoscopies.

Source: Fitzpatrick-Lewis et al. *Clin Colorectal Cancer* 2016.