

Early detection of colon cancer

for 50 to 54-year-old men and women by flexible sigmoidoscopy

The numbers below are averages for 50 to 54-year-old men and women who have or have not had a flexible sigmoidoscopy at least once within 15 years.

	1,000 persons who did not participate in screening	1,000 persons who participated in screening
Benefits		
How many died in total?		No difference: about 113 in both groups.
How many died of colon cancer?		No difference: about 3 in both groups.
How many developed advanced colon cancer?	15	11
Harms		
During the examination, how many experienced moderate to severe pain?	-	260
How many experienced severe complications (e.g., colon injuries and bleeding, also during the removal of precancerous lesions)?	-	fewer than 1

Short summary: Flexible sigmoidoscopy did not reduce the number of 50 to 54 year-olds who died from colon cancer. However, it resulted in four fewer persons out of 1,000 developing advanced colorectal cancer. Some experienced moderate to severe pain and, in rare cases, complications from the procedure.

Sources: Lin. Jama 2021;325(19):1978-1998. Rutter. Gut 2021;70(5):845-852.

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<https://www.hardingcenter.de/en/fact-boxes>