

If You Were Born in 1980 it's Time to Schedule Your First Colonoscopy

Recommended colorectal cancer screenings begin at age 45 for those of average risk

MACON, Ga., March 27, 2025 – If you were born in 1980, in addition to celebrating your 45th birthday, 2025 is the year doctors recommend that you should add a potentially life-saving colorectal screening to your to-do list.

March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, a time when individuals are urged to educate themselves about the disease, the third most diagnosed type of cancer, and assess their personal risk. Colorectal cancer, a combined term for colon cancer and rectal cancer, is the second most common cause of cancer death among men and women in the United States.

The death rate from colorectal cancer is particularly high in central Georgia where 14.8 deaths per 100,000 people can be attributed to the disease, higher than the national average of 13.7 deaths per 100,000 people.

Regular screenings can detect colorectal cancer — and precancerous, abnormal growths — early, when it's easiest to provide treatment and when positive outcomes are most likely. Atrium Health Navicent doctors recommend that most individuals of average risk have their first colonoscopy at age 45.

Atrium Health Navicent now offers a new [online risk assessment](#) that can help individuals learn more about their personal risk, and receive an individualized report after answering a few questions.

“Colorectal screenings, which can detect precancerous, abnormal growths before they turn into cancer, are a vital tool that's helping patients live longer, fuller lives,” said [Dr. David Armstrong](#), an Atrium Health Navicent surgical oncologist. “Sometimes, patients won't experience symptoms of colorectal cancer until it's become advanced. And the rate of relatively young people being diagnosed with the disease is increasing. It's important to talk with your doctor about your family history and follow through with having a colonoscopy every 10 years if you're 45 or older, or possibly earlier or more frequently if you have additional risk factors.”

During a colonoscopy, a scope is used to examine a patient's colon from end to end, looking for any signs of growths or polyps. Polyps can be removed during the procedure to prevent the development of colon cancer.

Here are six facts you may not know about colonoscopies:

1. When your doctor orders a colonoscopy, you'll receive prep instructions to cleanse your digestive system. It is important to follow the instructions so that your colon will be clean and easy to examine.
2. You'll be in and out in about four hours, and the actual procedure itself only takes about 45 minutes.
3. You won't feel anything during the procedure due to the administration of IV anesthesia, which also puts you to sleep.
4. If the doctor finds any precancerous or abnormal growths, they can remove them immediately. You don't have to come back for a second procedure unless the doctor advises more treatment is necessary.
5. When you wake up, you'll be taken to a private room for recovery. The medical staff will discuss with you the results of your procedure and answer any questions you may have.
6. After fasting for the procedure, you'll likely be hungry. By the time you are discharged, your digestive system will be functioning normally, and you can immediately resume food and drink.

If you've been diagnosed with colorectal cancer, physicians at the [Atrium Health Navicent Peyton Anderson Cancer Center](#) are available to provide multidisciplinary, integrated and comprehensive care. Our surgeons — which have trained and taught at some of the most prestigious surgical programs in the world — offer minimally invasive robotic and laparoscopic procedures to improve patient outcomes and speed recovery.

Atrium Health Navicent holds accreditation from the National Accreditation Program for Rectal Cancer (NAPRC), a quality program of the American College of Surgeons, and provides patients with peace of mind that they are receiving the best possible care. The cancer center was the first in Georgia to receive [NAPRC accreditation](#).

For more information about screenings for colon cancer, or to find a doctor, visit www.NavicentHealth.org and click “Find A Doctor.”

About Atrium Health Navicent

Atrium Health Navicent is the leading provider of health care in central and south Georgia and is committed to its mission of elevating health and well-being through compassionate care. Atrium Health Navicent is part of [Advocate Health](#), which is headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, and is the third-largest nonprofit health system in the United States, created from the combination of Atrium Health and Advocate Aurora Health. Atrium Health Navicent provides high-quality, personalized care in 53 specialties at more than 50 facilities throughout the region. As part of the largest, integrated, nonprofit health system in the Southeast, it is also able to tap into some of the nation’s leading medical experts and specialists with Atrium Health, allowing it to provide the best care close to home – including advanced innovations in virtual medicine and care. Throughout its 130-year history in the community, Atrium Health Navicent has remained dedicated to enhancing health and wellness for individuals throughout the region through nationally recognized quality care, community health initiatives and collaborative partnerships. It is also one of the leading teaching hospitals in the region, helping to ensure viability for rural health care for the next generation. For more information, please visit www.NavicentHealth.org.

About Advocate Health

[Advocate Health](#) is the third-largest nonprofit, integrated health system in the United States, created from the combination of Advocate Aurora Health and Atrium Health. Providing care under the names [Advocate Health Care](#) in Illinois; [Atrium Health](#) in the Carolinas, Georgia and Alabama; and [Aurora Health Care](#) in Wisconsin, Advocate Health is a national leader in clinical innovation, health outcomes, consumer experience and value-based care. Headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, Advocate Health services nearly 6 million patients and is engaged in hundreds of clinical trials and research studies, with [Wake Forest University School of Medicine](#) serving as the academic core of the enterprise. Advocate Health is nationally recognized for its expertise in heart and vascular, neurosciences, oncology, pediatrics and rehabilitation, as well as organ transplants, burn treatments and specialized musculoskeletal programs. Advocate Health employs more than 160,000 teammates across 69 hospitals and over 1,000 care locations, and offers one of the nation’s largest graduate medical education programs with over 2,000 residents and fellows across more than 200 programs. Committed to redefining care for all, Advocate Health provides more than \$6 billion in annual community benefits.

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