

# Colon Cancer Screening Patient Navigation Call Script

This document supports your conversations with colon cancer screening candidates. It is intended to help you convey the importance of colon cancer screening and alleviate fears about the screening procedures. **The goal of your conversation should be to ensure candidates will receive their colon cancer screening.**

Please keep in mind that patients will have various concerns, ranging from simple educational needs to complex emotional fears. In addition, patients will have varying levels of education and understanding about colon cancer and screening tests. You may find the following framework useful in answering patient questions:

1

## Clarify

Ask the patient questions to learn the nature of their concern/question to ensure that you are addressing their true concerns.

2

## Empathize

Acknowledge that the patient's question/concern is valid and express empathy (if applicable).

3

## Respond

Respond to the question/concern with transparency and specificity, using language provided in this document. Please note that the scripts provided are by no means comprehensive or final but rather are intended to act as guideposts that can spur additional responses, depending on the specific scenario and patient concern.

4

## Schedule

After all patient questions and concerns have been addressed, ensure that the patient has a plan for following up with his or her primary care provider (PCP) or gastrointestinal (GI) specialist. If they do not have an appointment already scheduled, ask if you can schedule a follow-up appointment for them.

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## Here is an example of how to use the framework.\*

### Example Scenario

- A patient received a letter instructing him/her to make an appointment for a GI consult
- However, the patient hasn't made the appointment because they do not think they need to be screened

Conversation Flow	Example Script
<b>Introduce yourself</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>"Hello. My name is _____ and I'm calling from Dr. &lt;state name of patient's PCP&gt; office. Our records show you're due for your colon cancer screening. Did you receive a letter in the mail about this?"</i></li> </ul>
<b>Patient states, "Yes, I did receive a letter in the mail stating that I need a colonoscopy, but I don't think I need to get screened."</b>	
<b>Ask clarifying questions</b> to better understand the patient's concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>"I'd be happy to help you with this. But first, can you help me understand why you don't think you need to be screened?"</i></li> </ul>
<b>Patient states, "I don't feel sick and I don't have any family history of colon cancer:"</b>	
<b>Empathize</b> with the patient to convey that you understand their concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>"I hear you. You're not alone. Many people think they don't need screening. Even if you don't feel sick, screening is important."<sup>1</sup></i></li> </ul>
<b>Respond directly</b> to address the patient's concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>"At age 45/50, both men and women should start getting screened for colon cancer, regardless of family history."<sup>2</sup></i></li> <li>▪ <i>"Most people with colon cancer have no family history of it. You can have colon cancer and not feel sick."<sup>3</sup></i></li> <li>▪ <i>"With regular, recommended screening, 79%-90% of colon cancer deaths can be prevented."<sup>2</sup></i></li> </ul>
<b>Option 1:</b> If the patient is comfortable, <b>ensure the patient is scheduled</b> for the GI consult appointment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>"Can I help you make an appointment to visit with the doctor who will do your colonoscopy?"</i></li> </ul>
<b>Option 2:</b> If the patient states they are not ready to make an appointment AND the patient meets criteria for a fecal immunochemical test (FIT), <b>offer FIT as a screening alternative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>"It's ok if you aren't ready to make an appointment."</i></li> <li>▪ <i>"There are other screening options available."<sup>4</sup></i></li> <li>▪ <i>"We can mail you a FIT kit. It's a simple take-home test that checks for hidden blood in your stool, which can be an early sign of cancer."<sup>4</sup></i></li> <li>▪ <i>"Would you be interested in this option?"</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Please note:</b> The FIT is only available to patients who:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have NEVER had polyps removed during a colonoscopy.</li> <li>2. Do not have any of the following exclusionary criteria: Include those classified as increased risk, or high risk.<sup>4</sup></li> </ol> <p>Check to see if the patient meets criteria for the FIT before offering it as an option.</p>

\*This script is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Always use your best professional judgment in your conversations with patients.

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# Objection Handler

Patients may have various reasons to avoid being screened for colon cancer. Below, you will find some of the most common objections and examples of possible responses. Please also be sure to clarify the patient concern and empathize with the patient (if applicable) before addressing patient concerns.

## ♥ Objection 1

*I have no problems with my colon.  
I don't have to be screened.*

## ♥ Objection 2

*I don't have a family history of colon cancer. I don't have to be screened.*

## ♥ Objection 3

*I don't have time to have a colonoscopy.*

## ♥ Objection 4

*I think the colonoscopy will be painful.*

## ♥ Objection 5

*I don't want to drink the colon-cleaning liquid.*

## ♥ Objection 6

*I don't want to have a colonoscopy.*

Objection/Concern	Example Responses
<b>Objection 1:</b> <i>I have no problems with my colon. I don't have to be screened.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "It's important to get screened. You can have colon cancer and not feel sick at all."<sup>5</sup></li> <li>▪ "With screening, your doctor can prevent colon cancer or detect it at an early stage."<sup>6</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Objection 2:</b> <i>I don't have a family history of colon cancer. I don't have to be screened.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Your doctor selected you as a candidate for colon cancer screening."</li> <li>▪ "Both men and women should be screened."<sup>1</sup></li> <li>▪ "Most people with colon cancer have no family history of it."<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Objection 3:</b> <i>I don't have time to have a colonoscopy.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "A lot of people think it takes more time than it actually does."</li> <li>▪ "You can prepare for the colonoscopy at home."<sup>7,8</sup></li> <li>▪ "The procedure usually takes only about 30 minutes."<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Objection 4:</b> <i>I think the colonoscopy will be painful.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "The colonoscopy is rarely painful."<sup>7</sup></li> <li>▪ "Your doctor will give you some medication that will make you feel sleepy and you probably will not feel anything."<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Objection 5:</b> <i>I don't want to drink the colon-cleaning liquid.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "There are things you can do to make the liquid taste better."<sup>8</sup></li> <li>▪ "Your doctor will give you tips to make it easier to prepare for the test."</li> </ul>
<b>Objection 6:</b> <i>I don't want to have a colonoscopy.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "There are simple take-home tests available."<sup>4</sup></li> <li>▪ "The fecal immunochemical test, or FIT for short, is a take-home test that checks for hidden blood in your stool. This can be an early sign of colon cancer."<sup>4</sup></li> </ul>

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# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

There are many other scenarios in which a patient will need clarifying information about colon cancer screening. Always use your best professional judgment in answering customer questions/concerns. In order to answer other possible customer questions/concerns, please reference the following FAQs.

## Disease Questions

- Question 1: *What is colon cancer?*
- Question 2: *Should I be screened for colon cancer?*
- Question 3: *How serious is colon cancer?*

## Screening Procedure Questions

- Question 4: *What is a colon cancer screening test?*
- Question 5: *What colon cancer screening tests are available?*
- Question 6: *What is a colonoscopy?*
- Question 7: *Who performs a colonoscopy?*
- Question 8: *How long does a colonoscopy take?*
- Question 9: *What do I need to do to prepare for a colonoscopy?*
- Question 10: *What is the best colon cancer screening test?*
- Question 11: *Are there colon cancer screening tests available besides the colonoscopy?*
- Question 12: *What is a fecal immunochemical test (FIT)?*
- Question 13: *How is the fecal immunochemical test (FIT) done?*
- Question 14: *What do I need to do to prepare for a fecal immunochemical test (FIT)?*

## Cost Questions

- Question 15: *How much does colon cancer screening cost?*
- Question 16: *Do I have to pay for office visits when I see my doctor for colon cancer screening?*
- Question 17: *Do you have transportation available to help me go to my doctor's office?*

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Question	Example Responses
<b>Disease Questions</b>	
<p>Question 1: <i>What is colon cancer?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Colon cancer is the third-leading cause of cancer-related death in the United States.”<sup>1</sup></li> <li>“It almost always develops from abnormal growths in the colon, which may turn into cancer.”</li> <li>“Fortunately, screening can prevent or detect colon cancer at an early stage.”<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>
<p>Question 2: <i>Should I be screened for colon cancer?</i></p>	<p><b>Clarify:</b> “Have you been previously screened for colon cancer?”</p> <p>[If yes, find out when the person was screened for colon cancer and by what method – colonoscopy or FIT. Report the results to their doctor to determine if they are still a screening candidate and follow up with the patient.]</p> <p>[If no, continue below.]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Your doctor has selected you as a candidate for screening.”</li> <li>“Beginning at age 45/50, both men and women should be screened regularly for colon cancer, regardless of family history.”<sup>2</sup></li> <li>“Even if you don’t feel sick, screening is important.”<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>
<p>Question 3: <i>How serious is colon cancer?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Colon cancer is the third-leading cause of cancer-related death in the United States.”<sup>1</sup></li> <li>“Every day, around 400 people in the United States are diagnosed with colon cancer.”<sup>1</sup></li> <li>“With regular, recommended screening, 79%-90% of colon cancer deaths can be prevented.”<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>

## Screening Procedure Questions

<p>Question 4: <i>What is a colon cancer screening test?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“A colon cancer screening test looks for the disease when a person doesn’t have symptoms.”<sup>7</sup></li> <li>“Your doctor looks for abnormal growths in your colon that can be cancer or can develop into cancer.”<sup>7</sup></li> <li>“You can have abnormal growths and not be able to feel them.”<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>
<p>Question 5: <i>What colon cancer screening tests are available?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“There are several types of tests available that screen for colon cancer.”<sup>7</sup></li> <li>“A colonoscopy is one of the preferred tests. It lets your doctor see if there are abnormal growths in your colon.”<sup>7</sup></li> <li>“Another test is the fecal immunochemical test, or FIT for short. This simple take-home test checks for hidden blood in your stool, which can be an early sign of cancer.”<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>

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Question	Example Responses
<b>Screening Procedure Questions (continued)</b>	
<p>Question 6: <i>What is a colonoscopy?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“A colonoscopy is a screening test that allows your doctor to look inside your entire colon and rectum.”<sup>7</sup></li> <li>“Your doctor will use a thin, flexible tube with a tiny camera to look for abnormal growths and remove them. These growths can be cancer or an early sign of cancer.”<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>
<p>Question 7: <i>Who performs a colonoscopy?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“A specially trained doctor can do your colonoscopy. A nurse may assist in the procedure.”</li> <li>“It is done in a doctor’s office with special tools.”<sup>9</sup></li> </ul>
<p>Question 8: <i>How long does a colonoscopy take?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“A colonoscopy usually takes about 30 minutes.”<sup>9</sup></li> <li>“It may take longer if abnormal growths are found and removed.”</li> </ul>
<p>Question 9: <i>What do I need to do to prepare for a colonoscopy?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Generally, you’ll need to stop eating solid foods the day before your test.”<sup>9</sup></li> <li>“You will also drink a special liquid to make you go to the bathroom. This will make sure your colon is empty and clean.”<sup>9</sup></li> <li>“Your doctor will give you a list of instructions when you have your visit.”<sup>9</sup></li> </ul>
<p>Question 10: <i>What is the best colon cancer screening test?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“There is no one single best test for any person.”<sup>10</sup></li> <li>“You and your doctor should decide which screening test is best for you.”</li> </ul>
<p>Question 11: <i>Are there colon cancer screening tests available besides the colonoscopy?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“It depends. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Have you had any abnormal growths removed during a colonoscopy?</li> <li>– Have you ever had &lt;insert specific exclusionary criteria TBD&gt;?”</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>[If the patient answers “Yes” to any of the above]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“I can’t recommend any other tests to you. You should talk to your doctor to see if there are other tests you can do. Would you like to make an appointment now?”</li> </ul> <p>[If the patient answers “No” to all of the above]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Yes, you may be able to take a different test. The FIT is a simple take-home test that checks for hidden blood in your stool. This can be an early sign of cancer.”<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>
<p>Question 12: <i>What is a fecal immunochemical test (FIT)?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“The FIT is a simple take-home test that checks for hidden blood in your stool. This can be an early sign of cancer.”<sup>7</sup></li> <li>“If test results come back positive, you may have colon cancer. You’ll need to get a colonoscopy to find out more.”<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>

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Question	Example Responses
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### Screening Procedure Questions (continued)

<p>Question 13: <i>How is the fecal immunochemical test (FIT) done?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>"You'll be given the FIT kit and instructions on how to do the test at home."<sup>5</sup></i></li> <li>▪ <i>"Basically, you will collect some samples of your stool."<sup>5</sup></i></li> <li>▪ <i>"You mail these samples to your doctor or a lab."<sup>5</sup></i></li> </ul>
<p>Question 14: <i>What do I need to do to prepare for a fecal immunochemical test (FIT)?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>"You don't need to do anything special to prepare for the FIT."<sup>5-7</sup></i></li> </ul>

### Cost Questions

<p>Question 15: <i>How much does colon cancer screening cost?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>"Starting when you are age 50, insurance plans will cover 100% of screening costs. Although the American Cancer Society recommends that screening start at age 45, insurers are not required to cover costs, but some are likely to do so." "Call your insurance plan to check your coverage."<sup>11</sup></i></li> </ul>
<p>Question 16: <i>Do I have to pay for office visits when I see my doctor for colon cancer screening?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>"You may have to pay a co-pay for the office visit."<sup>11</sup></i></li> <li>▪ <i>"You should call your health insurance plan to check your coverage."<sup>11</sup></i></li> </ul>
<p>Question 17: <i>Do you have transportation available to help me go to my doctor's office?</i></p>	<p>[Placeholder to convey any programs available to patients to help with transportation]</p>

**References:** **1.** American Cancer Society. *Cancer Facts & Figures 2019*. Atlanta, GA: American Cancer Society Pub. No. 500819. <https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/research/cancer-facts-and-statistics/annual-cancer-facts-and-figures/2019/cancer-facts-and-figures-2019.pdf>. Accessed February 26, 2019. **2.** Wolf AM, Fontham ET, Church TR, et al. Colorectal cancer screening for average-risk adults: 2018 guideline update from the American Cancer Society. *CA Cancer J Clin*. 2018;68(4):250-281. **3.** Signs and symptoms of colorectal cancer. American Cancer Society website. <https://www.cancer.org/latest-news/signs-and-symptoms-of-colon-cancer.html>. Accessed February 26, 2019. **4.** Colorectal cancer screening: What are my options? American Cancer Society website. <https://www.cancer.org/latest-news/understanding-tests-that-screen-for-colon-cancer.html>. Accessed February 26, 2019. **5.** Colorectal cancer screening. [https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/pdf/basic\\_fs\\_eng\\_color.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/pdf/basic_fs_eng_color.pdf). Accessed February 26, 2019. **6.** Colorectal (colon) cancer: What should I know about screening? Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website. [https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/basic\\_info/screening/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/basic_info/screening/index.htm). Accessed February 26, 2019. **7.** Colorectal cancer screening tests. American Cancer Society website. <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/colon-rectal-cancer/detection-diagnosis-staging/screening-tests-used.html>. Accessed February 26, 2019. **8.** Preparing for a colonoscopy. Harvard Health Publishing website. <http://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/preparing-for-a-colonoscopy>. Accessed February 26, 2019. **9.** Colonoscopy. Cancer.Net website. <http://www.cancer.net/navigating-cancer-care/diagnosing-cancer/tests-and-procedures/colonoscopy>. Accessed February 26, 2019. **10.** Colorectal (colon) cancer: colorectal cancer screening tests. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website. [http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/basic\\_info/screening/tests.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/basic_info/screening/tests.htm). Accessed February 26, 2019. **11.** Insurance coverage for colorectal cancer screening. American Cancer Society website. <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/colon-rectal-cancer/detection-diagnosis-staging/screening-coverage-laws.html>. Accessed February 26, 2019.

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