

Early detection of colon cancer in women

by flexible sigmoidoscopy

The numbers below are averages for women over 50 years** of age who either did or did not participate in a screening examination by flexible sigmoidoscopy (examination of the rectum and lower colon) over the course of ten years.

	1,000 women who did not participate in screening	1,000 women who participated in screening
Benefits		
How many women died of colon cancer?	4	3
How many women were diagnosed with advanced colon cancer?*	12	10
Harms		
During the examination, how many women experienced moderate-to-severe pain?	-	200
How many women experienced severe complications (such as injuries to or bleeding of the colon?)	-	fewer than 1

*A diagnosis of colon cancer can be prevented through the removal of precancerous lesions (polyps) during the screening examination. **The numbers concerning harms refer to averages reported in studies including both men and women.

Short summary: The flexible sigmoidoscopy reduced the number of women who died from colon cancer by 1 out of every 1,000 women. Some women experienced moderate to severe pain and, in rare cases, complications from the procedure.

Sources: [1] Holme et al. BMJ 2017;356:i6673 [2] Fitzpatrick-Lewis et al. Clin Colorectal Cancer 2016;15(4):298-313. [3] Atkin et al. Lancet 2002;359(9314):1291-300.