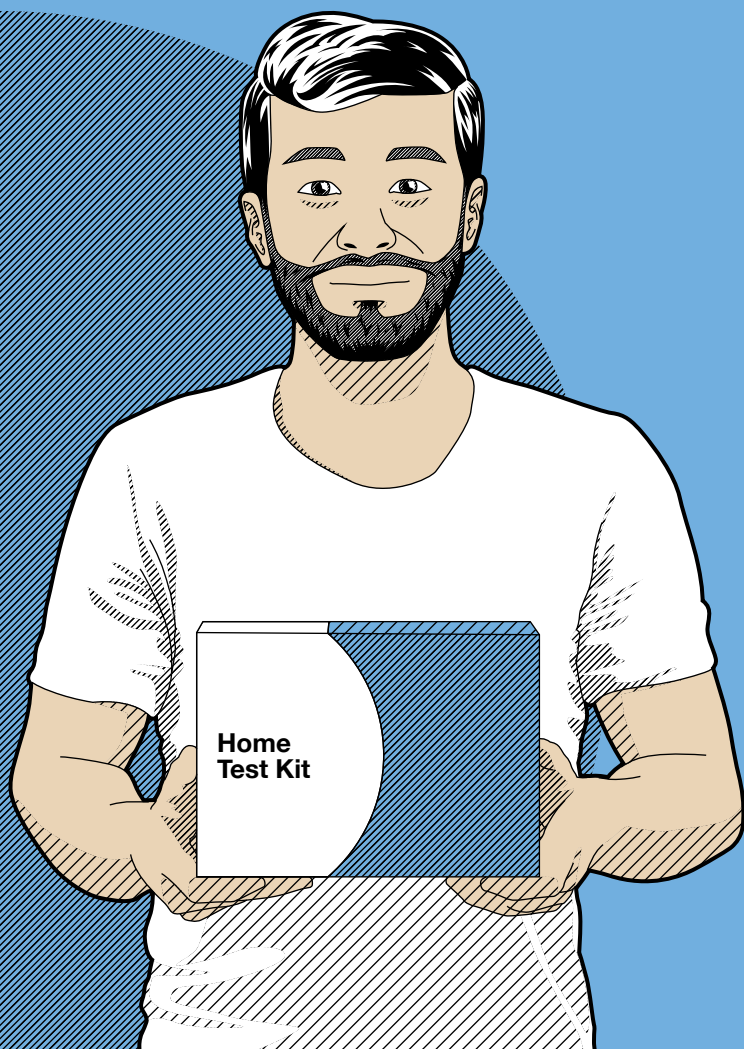


# ***How To Do an At-Home Colon Cancer Test***





## Introduction

Colorectal cancer, also called colon cancer, is one of the leading causes of cancer-related death in New York City (NYC). Regular screening can help prevent this kind of cancer or find it earlier, when it is easier to treat.

Colon cancer cases have been increasing among people younger than age 50. People without risk factors should start screening at age 45. If you have risk factors, such as a close family member with colon cancer, you may need to start screening earlier or get screened more often.

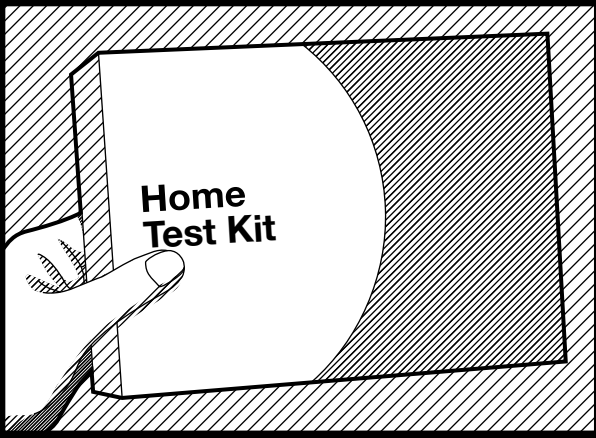
Discuss your personal risk with your health care provider to determine how early and how often you should be screened. It is better to know about your risks sooner rather than later. Having risk factors does not necessarily mean you will develop colon cancer, and having no risk factors does not mean you will not get the disease.

There are different colon cancer screening tests, including stool-based tests and colonoscopy. Stool-based tests may be more convenient because they do not require preparation and can be done at home. They can detect blood or changes in genes (DNA), which can be signs of colon cancer, from a stool (feces) sample. Stool-based test options include:

- A fecal immunochemical test (FIT), which detects blood. A FIT is recommended every year.
- A high-sensitivity guaiac-based fecal occult blood test (HSgFOBT), which detects blood. An HSgFOBT is recommended every year.
- A multi-target stool DNA test (FIT-DNA), which detects blood and changes in genes that could be signs of cancer. A FIT-DNA is recommended once every three years.

A colonoscopy is done at a health care provider's office and requires preparation and setting time aside for the procedure. It is a visual exam with a special camera that allows a health care provider to directly observe your colon and remove small polyps found along the way. If a growth is too large to remove during the colonoscopy, they will take a sample to see if there is cancer or if it is benign (not cancer). Removing polyps can help prevent cancer. A colonoscopy is done once every 10 years or sometimes more frequently, depending on your personal risk and what the exam shows. A positive stool-based test must be followed up with a colonoscopy.

Talk to your health care provider to find out which test to do. If you are doing an at-home stool-based test, read this story to learn more.



HEY MARK.  
WHAT DO YOU  
HAVE THERE?

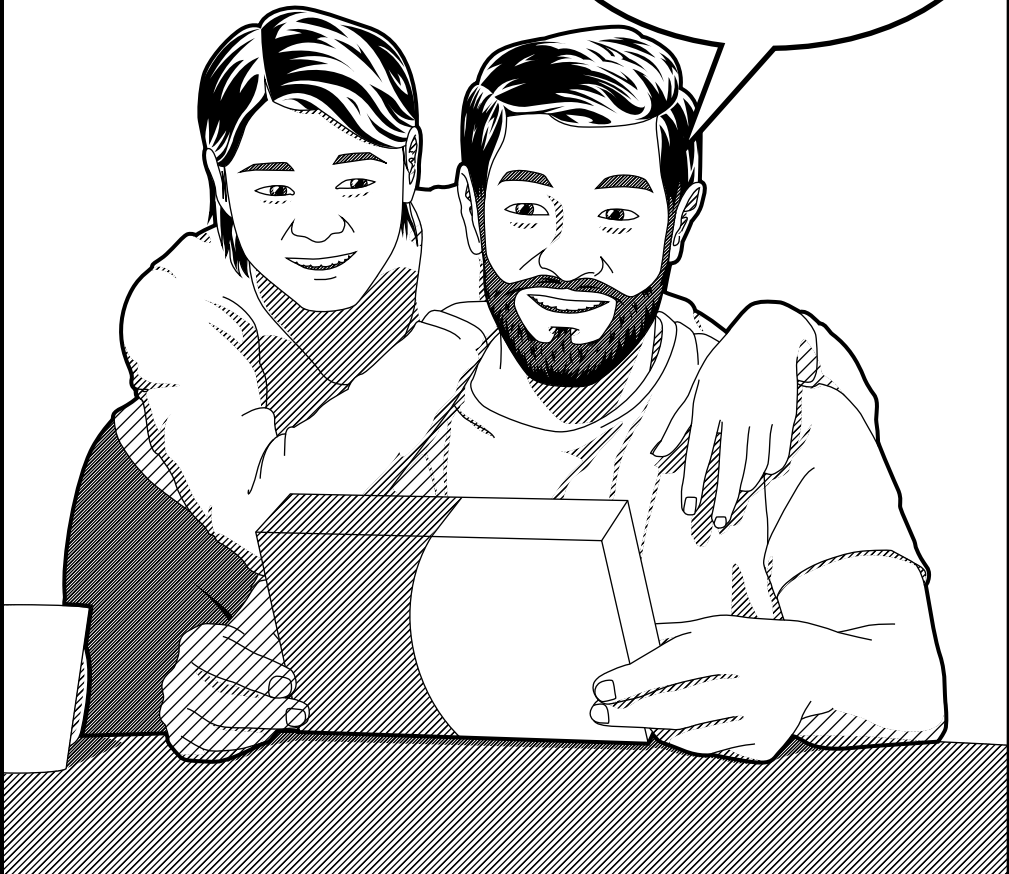
HEY SANDRA.  
THIS IS THE STOOL-BASED  
TEST THAT MY HEALTH CARE  
PROVIDER SUGGESTED  
TO ME TO SCREEN FOR  
COLON CANCER.




I AM HAPPY YOU ARE TAKING STEPS TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM COLON CANCER, MARK. HOW DOES THIS TEST WORK?

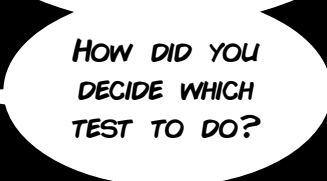
I TAKE A SMALL SAMPLE OF MY POOP, THEN I SEND IT TO A LAB WHERE THEY WILL ANALYZE MY SAMPLE FOR HIDDEN BLOOD.

HIDDEN BLEEDING CAN BE A WARNING SIGN FOR COLON CANCER OR SOME OTHER ILLNESS.

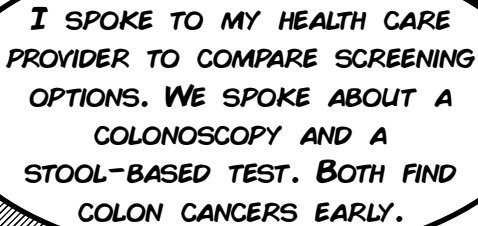




DETECTING CANCER AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE SOUNDS SMART. THAT WOULD MEAN IT IS EASIER TO TREAT, RIGHT?



HOW DID YOU DECIDE WHICH TEST TO DO?

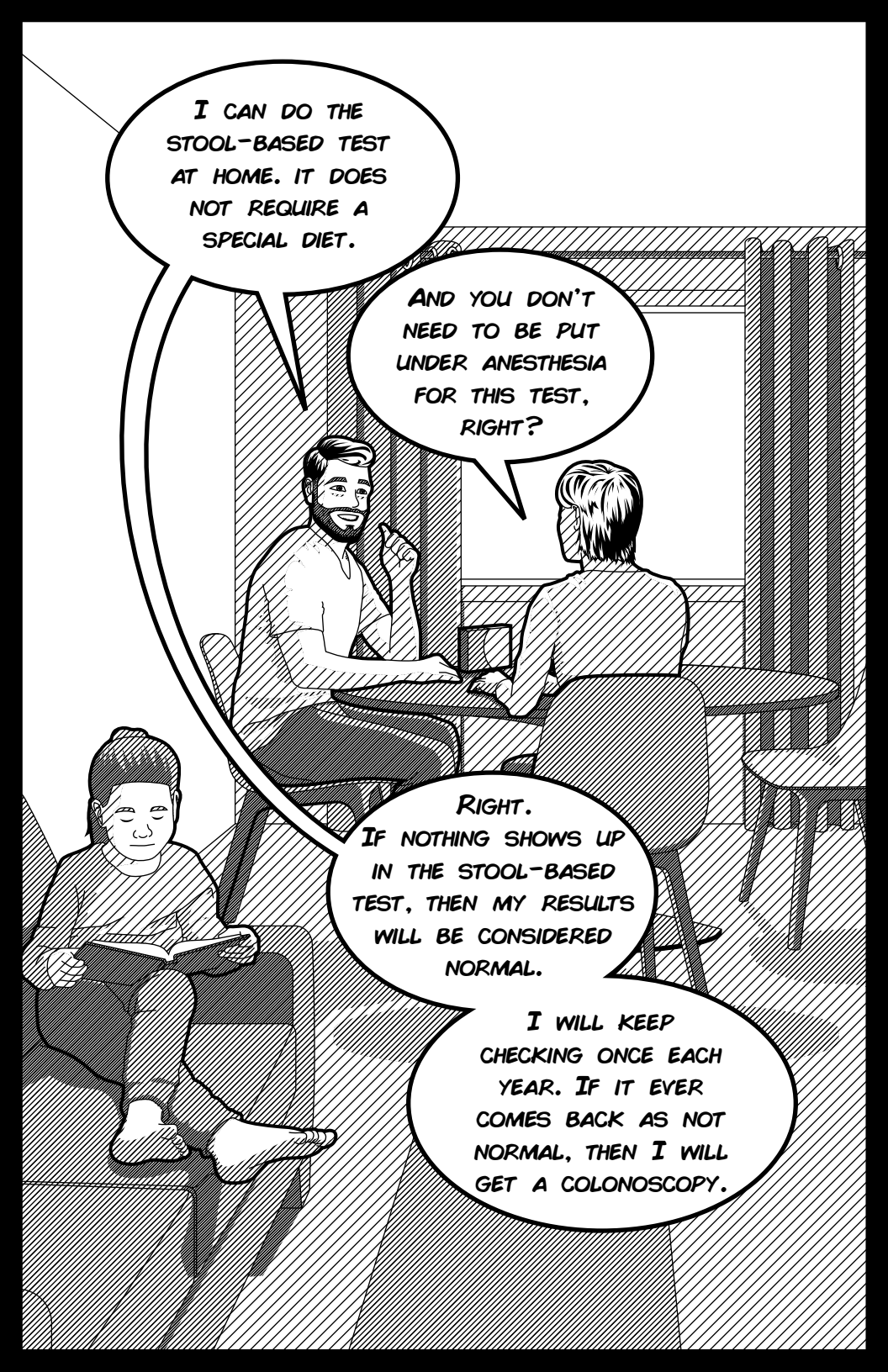


I SPOKE TO MY HEALTH CARE PROVIDER TO COMPARE SCREENING OPTIONS. WE SPOKE ABOUT A COLONOSCOPY AND A STOOL-BASED TEST. BOTH FIND COLON CANCERS EARLY.



HOW ARE THEY DIFFERENT?





I CAN DO THE  
STOOL-BASED TEST  
AT HOME. IT DOES  
NOT REQUIRE A  
SPECIAL DIET.

AND YOU DON'T  
NEED TO BE PUT  
UNDER ANESTHESIA  
FOR THIS TEST,  
RIGHT?

RIGHT.  
IF NOTHING SHOWS UP  
IN THE STOOL-BASED  
TEST, THEN MY RESULTS  
WILL BE CONSIDERED  
NORMAL.

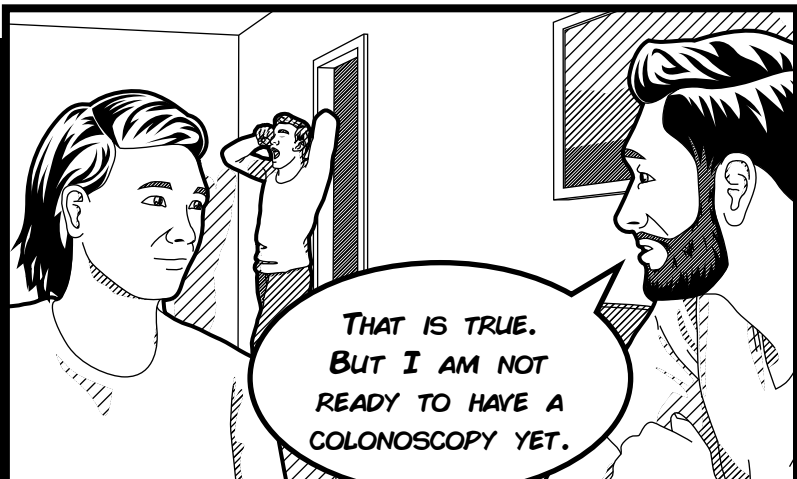
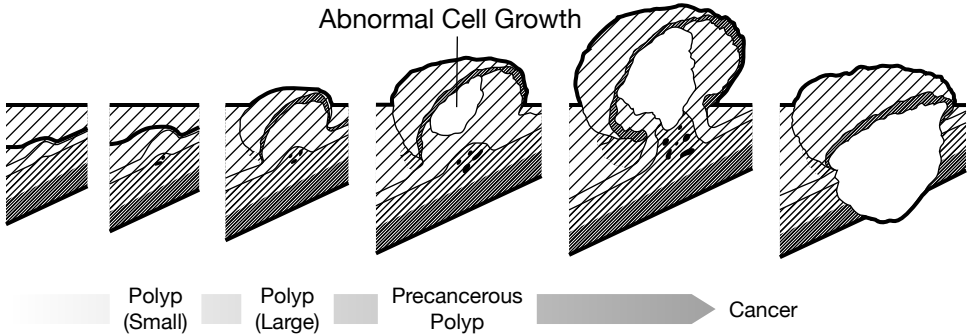
I WILL KEEP  
CHECKING ONCE EACH  
YEAR. IF IT EVER  
COMES BACK AS NOT  
NORMAL, THEN I WILL  
GET A COLONOSCOPY.



I HAD A COLONOSCOPY, REMEMBER? A COLONOSCOPY CAN ALSO TAKE OUT POLYPS THAT MIGHT BECOME CANCER.



### Stages of Polyps

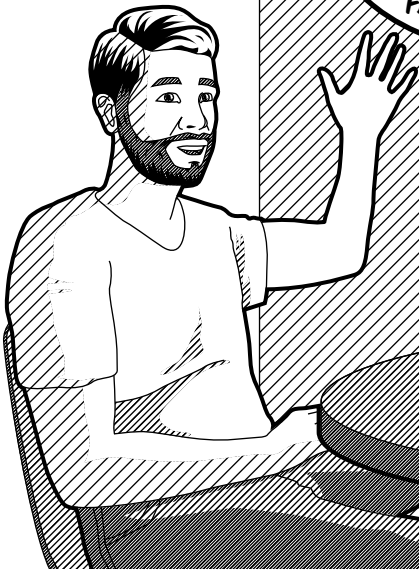




HEY DAD. WHAT DO YOU HAVE THERE?

HEY ANDREW!  
THIS IS A COLON  
CANCER TEST I GOT  
FROM MY HEALTH  
CARE PROVIDER.

THIS IS ONE OF  
A FEW TYPES OF  
STOOL-BASED TESTS  
THAT CAN BE MAILED  
FROM YOUR HOME.





INTERESTING.

I JUST CHECKED THE  
EXPIRATION DATE OF THE  
TEST, AND IT'S STILL  
GOOD. I WANT TO DO  
THE TEST SOON, BEFORE  
I FORGET.



HOW LONG  
DOES IT TAKE?

ONLY A FEW  
MINUTES, THEN I  
WILL PUT IT IN  
THE MAIL.

GOT IT. LET ME KNOW  
WHEN YOU ARE FINISHED.  
WE CAN TAKE A WALK TO  
MAIL IT TOGETHER TODAY.

OK!

Talk to your health care provider to decide which kind of stool-based test is best for you, as this story only demonstrates a few options among many. There are small differences between tests and different ways to return them. Follow your kit's instructions.

# HOW TO USE A FIT TEST

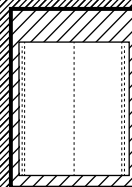


"DO NOT PERFORM TEST IF YOU HAVE ACTIVE BLEEDING." I DO NOT HAVE THAT.

**1** Open up the kit. Keep it clean and dry.



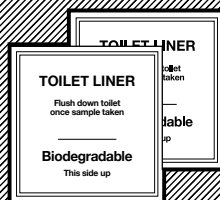
Patient Details Form



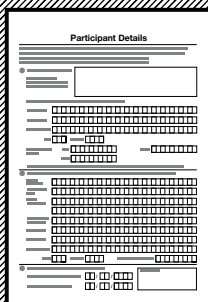
Resealable Bag



Sample Tube



Biodegradable Toilet Liner

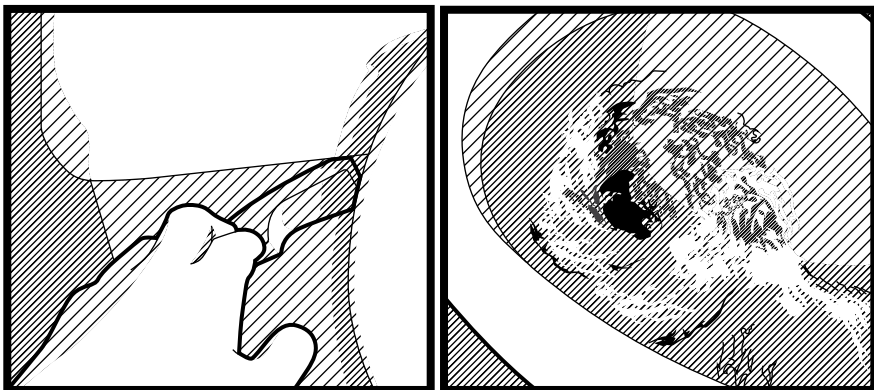


Instructions

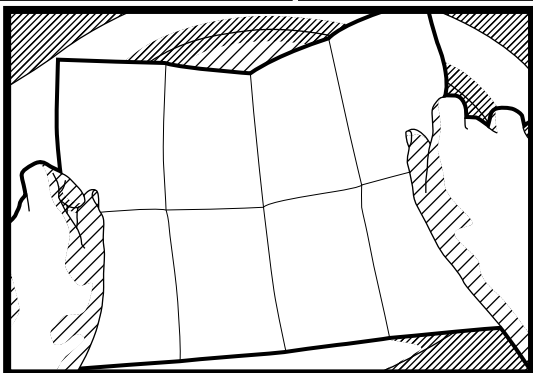
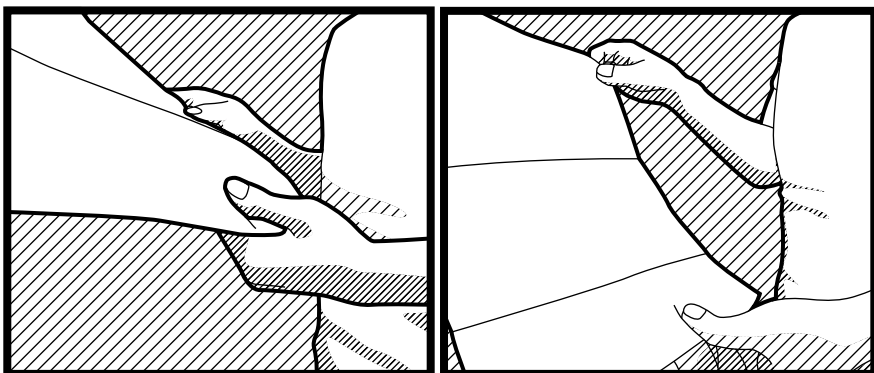


Mailing Envelope

- 2** Flush the toilet twice. If you have cleaners in your toilet bowl, remove them and flush twice.

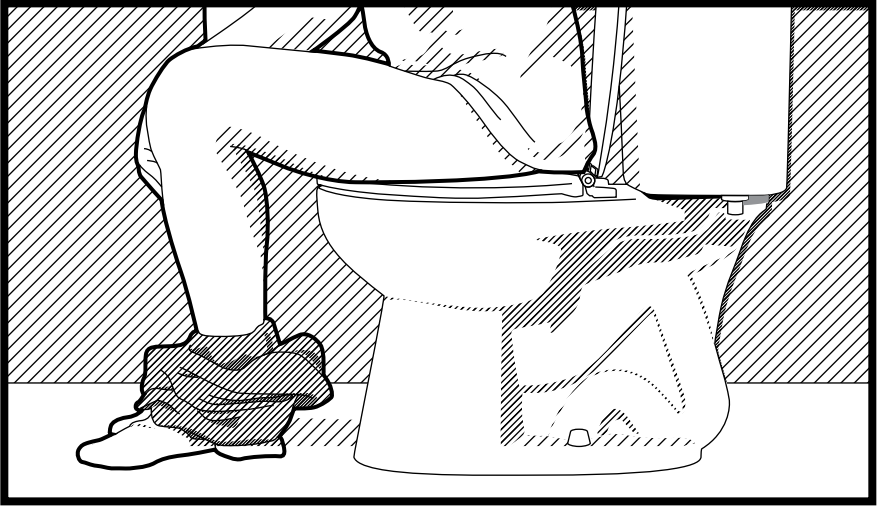


- 3** Unfold the large flushable tissue paper. Place it on the surface of the toilet water.



**4**

Have a bowel movement as normal. Do not flush the toilet. Discard your used toilet tissue, but not in the toilet bowl.

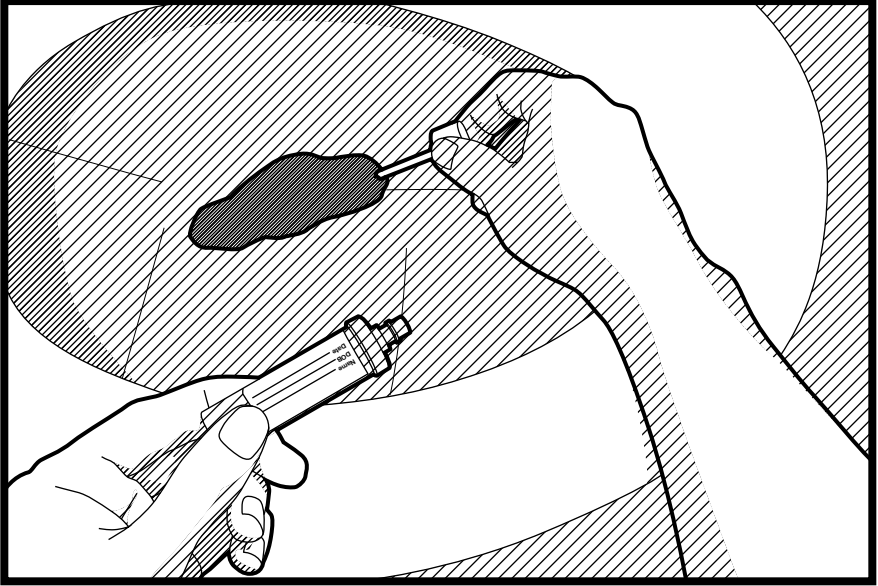


**5**

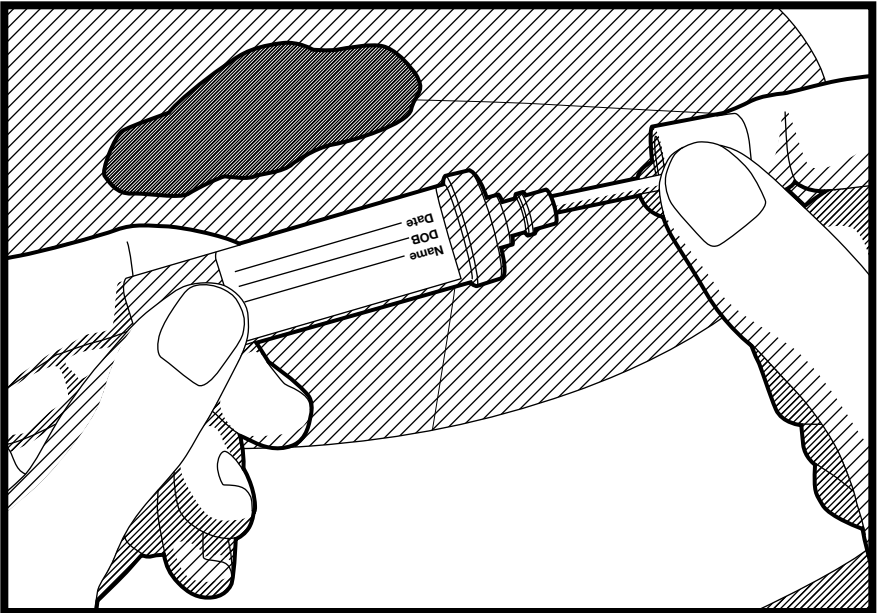
Brush the tip of the sample probe on the stool.



- 6** Do not take any large pieces of stool. Shake the probe once to remove any clumps or water droplets.

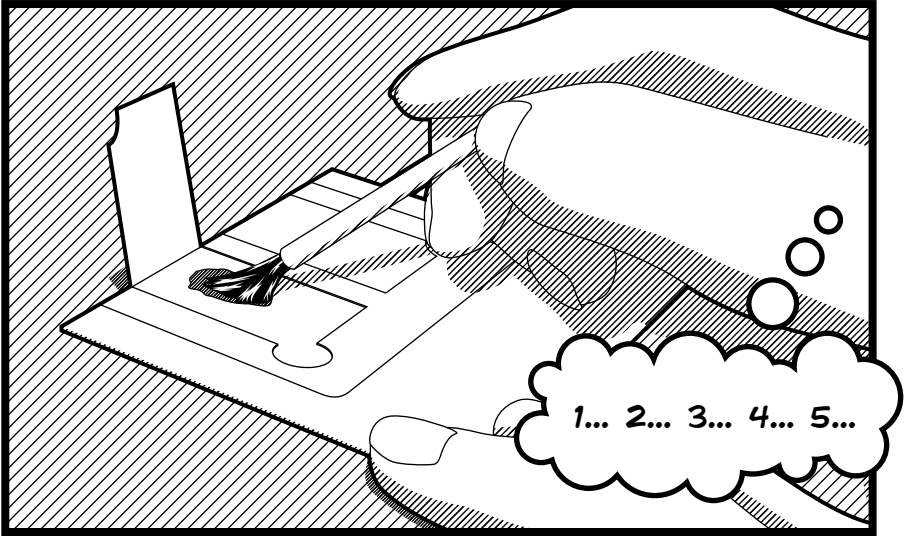


- 7** Put the probe back in the tube and close it tightly. Make sure no stool goes outside of the tube. If it does, you can wipe it off.



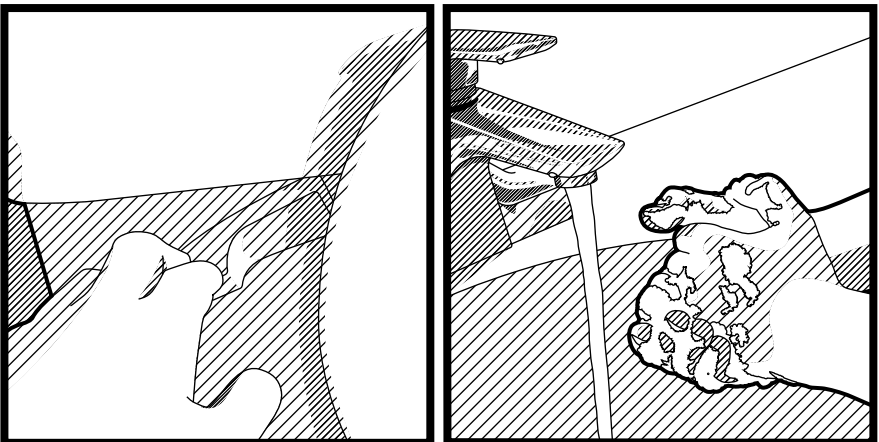


- 8** Your kit may have a card and brush. Brush a small amount of stool sample in the box on the card. This takes about five seconds. Make sure no stool goes outside of the box. If it does, wipe it off.



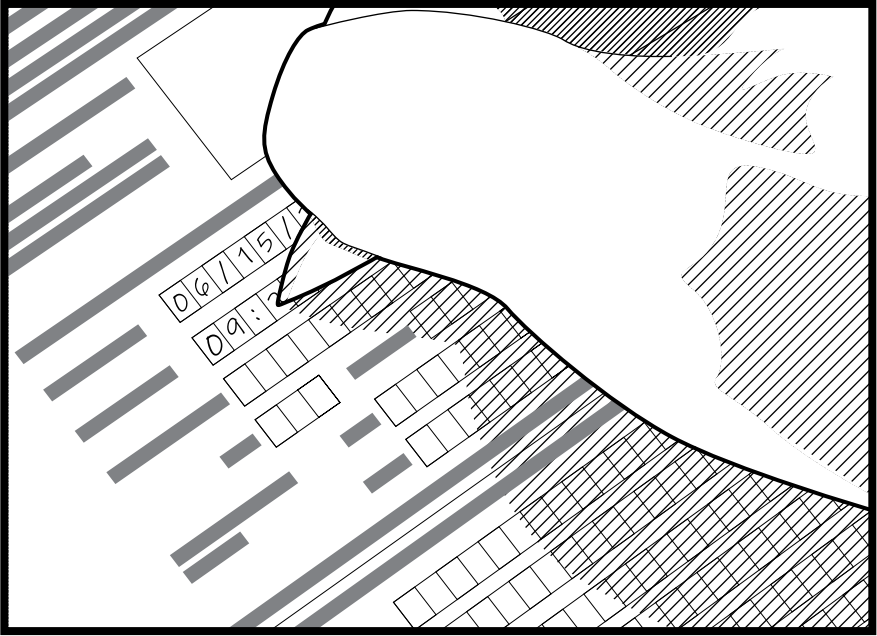
Your kit may have a second probe or brush to take a second sample. If it does, take a second sample the same way as before.

- 9** Flush the toilet. Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds.



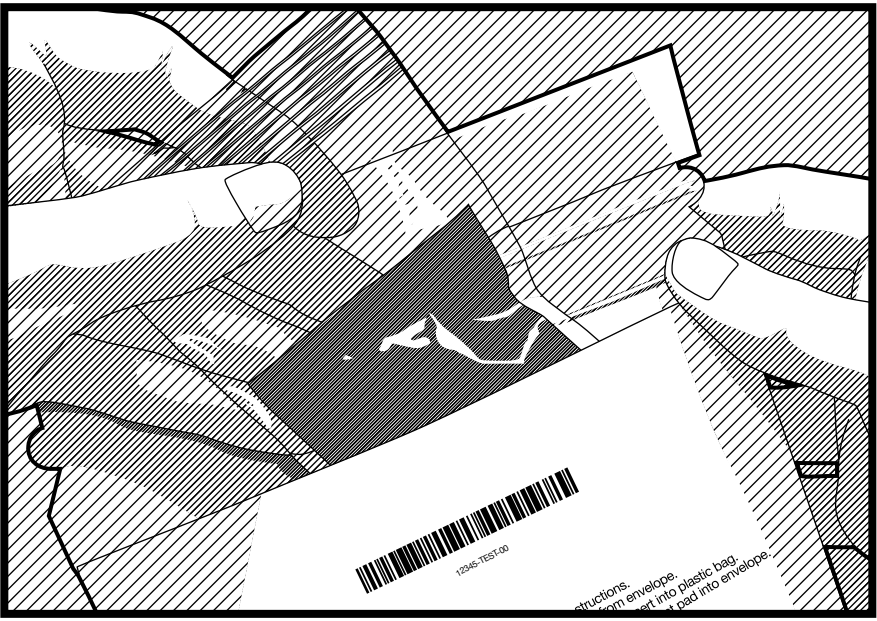
**10**

Fill out any labels or forms, including your name and the date the sample was taken.



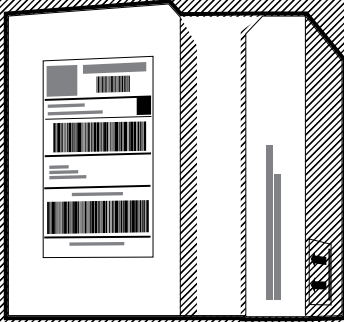
**11**

Put the sample in the envelope mailer and seal it.



# HOW TO USE A FIT-DNA (COLOGUARD) TEST

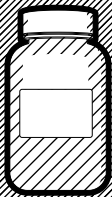
Another test type is a multi-target stool DNA test, or FIT-DNA (Cologuard). It can detect hidden blood and changes in genes that could be signs of colon cancer.



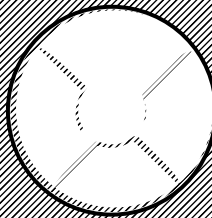
Shipment Box With Bag



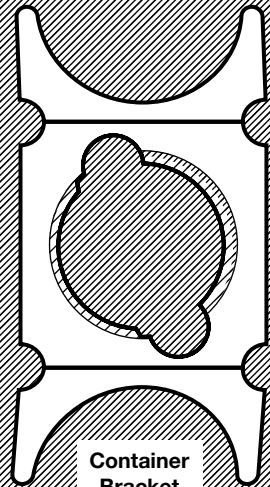
Sample Tube



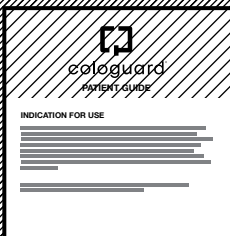
Liquid  
Preservative



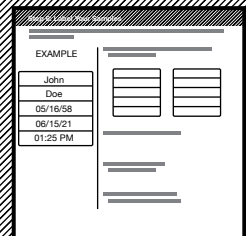
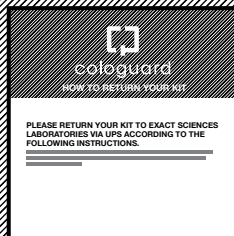
Sample  
Container



Container  
Bracket



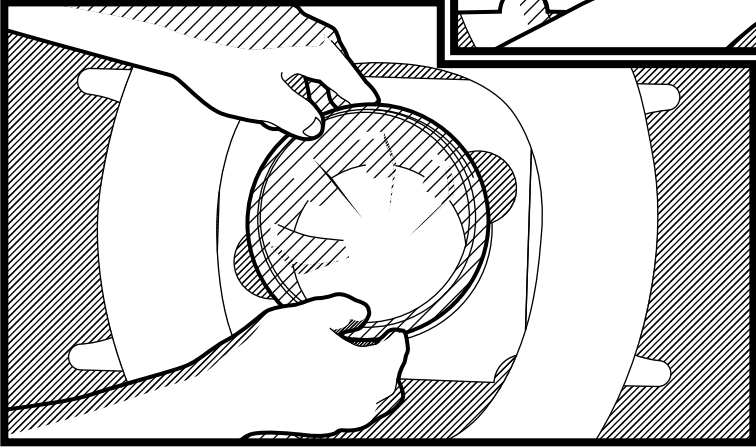
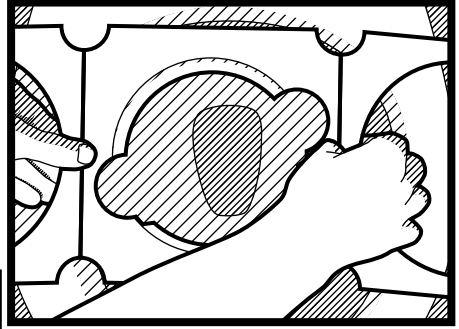
Instructional Materials



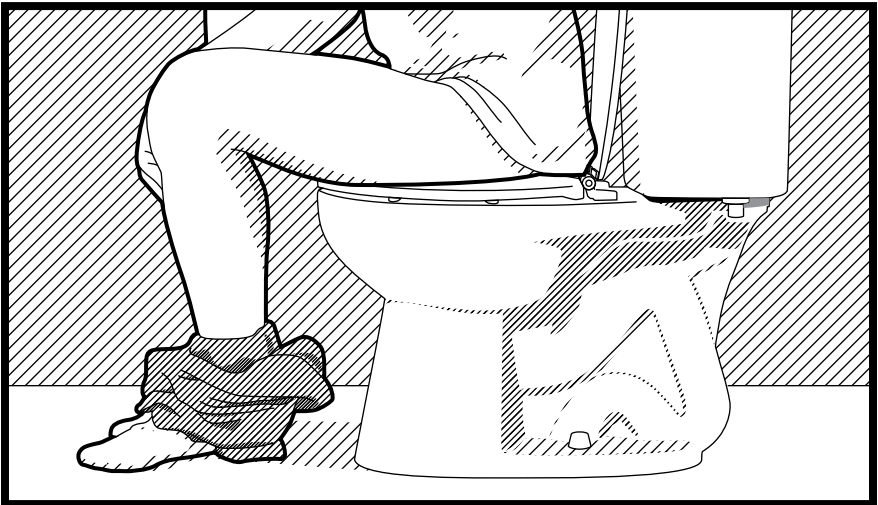
Sample Labels

**Note:** Keep the bag and box. You will need them to store and ship your stool sample later.

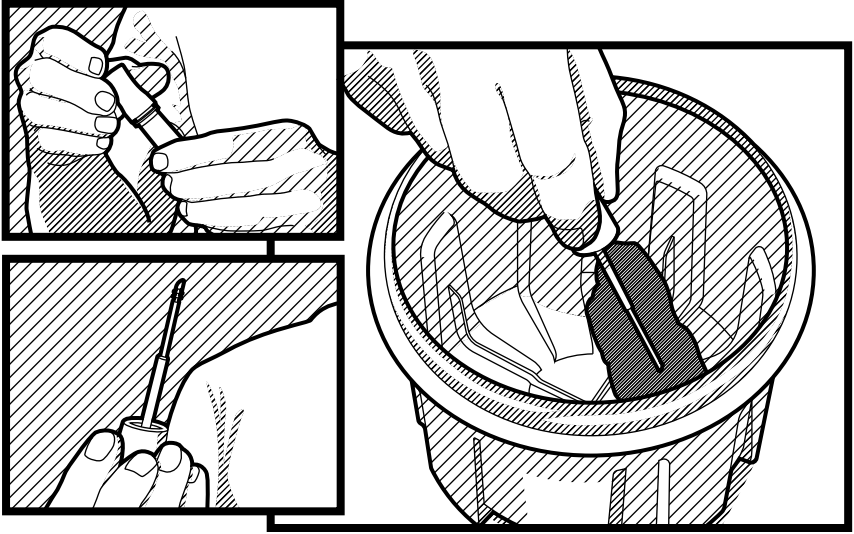
- 1** Place the bracket under the toilet seat. Put the open sample container in the bracket.



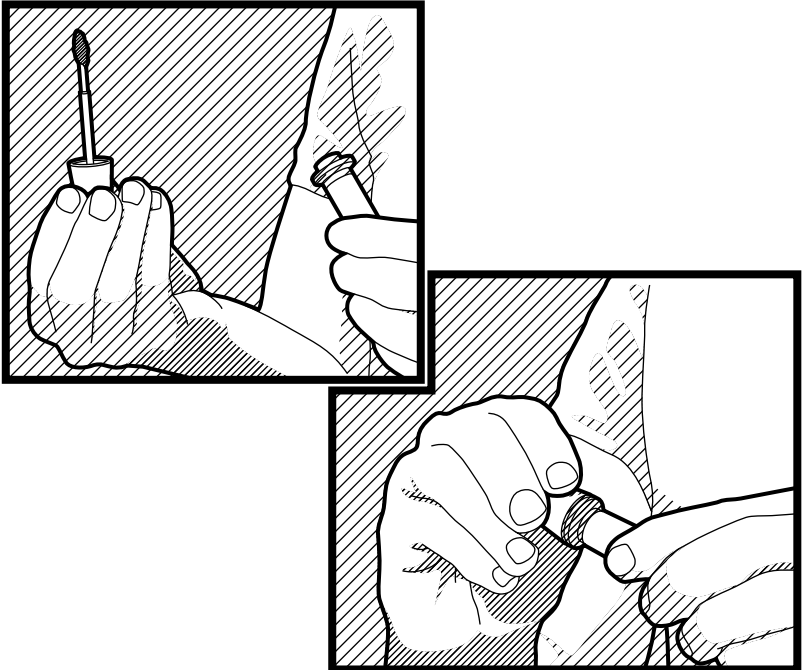
- 2** Have a bowel movement as normal.



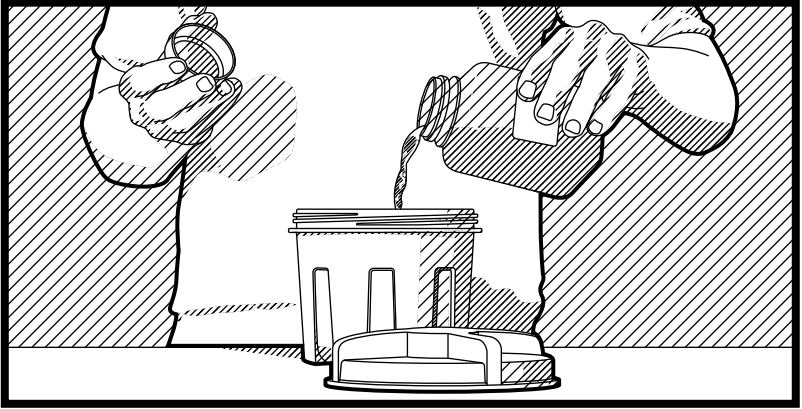
- 3** Scrape the tip of the sample probe on the stool. Make sure to cover the grooves on the end of the probe. Do not take any large clumps of stool.



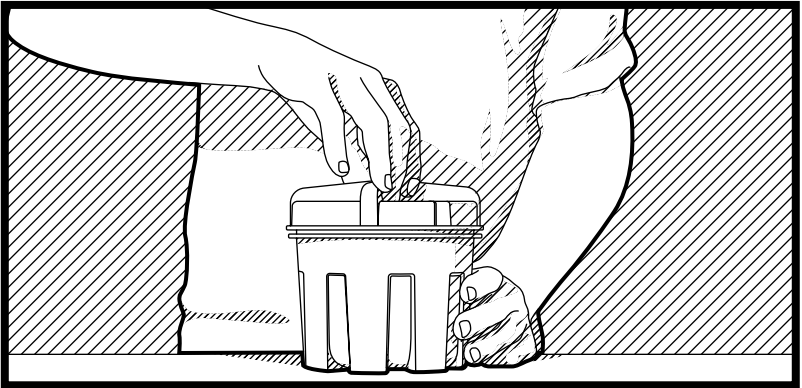
- 4** Put the probe back in the tube. Close it tightly.



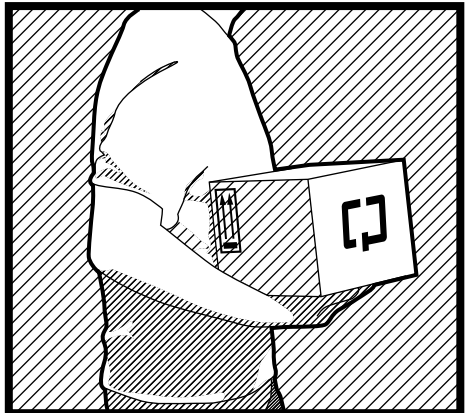
- 5** Pour the preservative into the container with the stool.



- 6** Close it tightly. Make sure no stool goes outside of the container. If it does, wipe it off.



- 7** Ship your sample with UPS using the address indicated in the kit. You do not need to pay for postage.





THAT WAS QUICK!

YES. THE DIRECTIONS WERE CLEAR.

WHEN DO YOU HAVE TO MAIL IT?



WITHIN 24  
HOURS.

SENDING IT OUT FOR  
ANALYSIS IS REALLY  
IMPORTANT, SO I WANT  
TO MAIL IT AS SOON  
AS POSSIBLE.



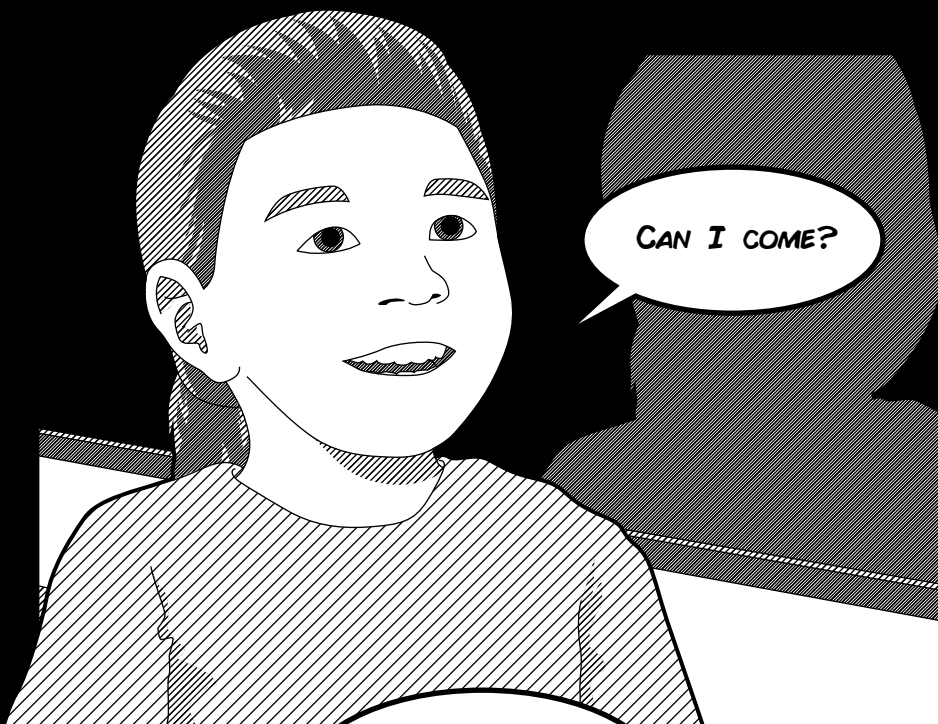
LET'S GO NOW. WE  
CAN GET IN SOME  
EXERCISE.

OK. A WALK  
ALWAYS SOUNDS  
GOOD.

DID YOU KNOW  
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY  
CAN HELP PREVENT  
COLON CANCER  
TOO?

THAT WOULD  
BE GOOD FOR  
ALL OF US.



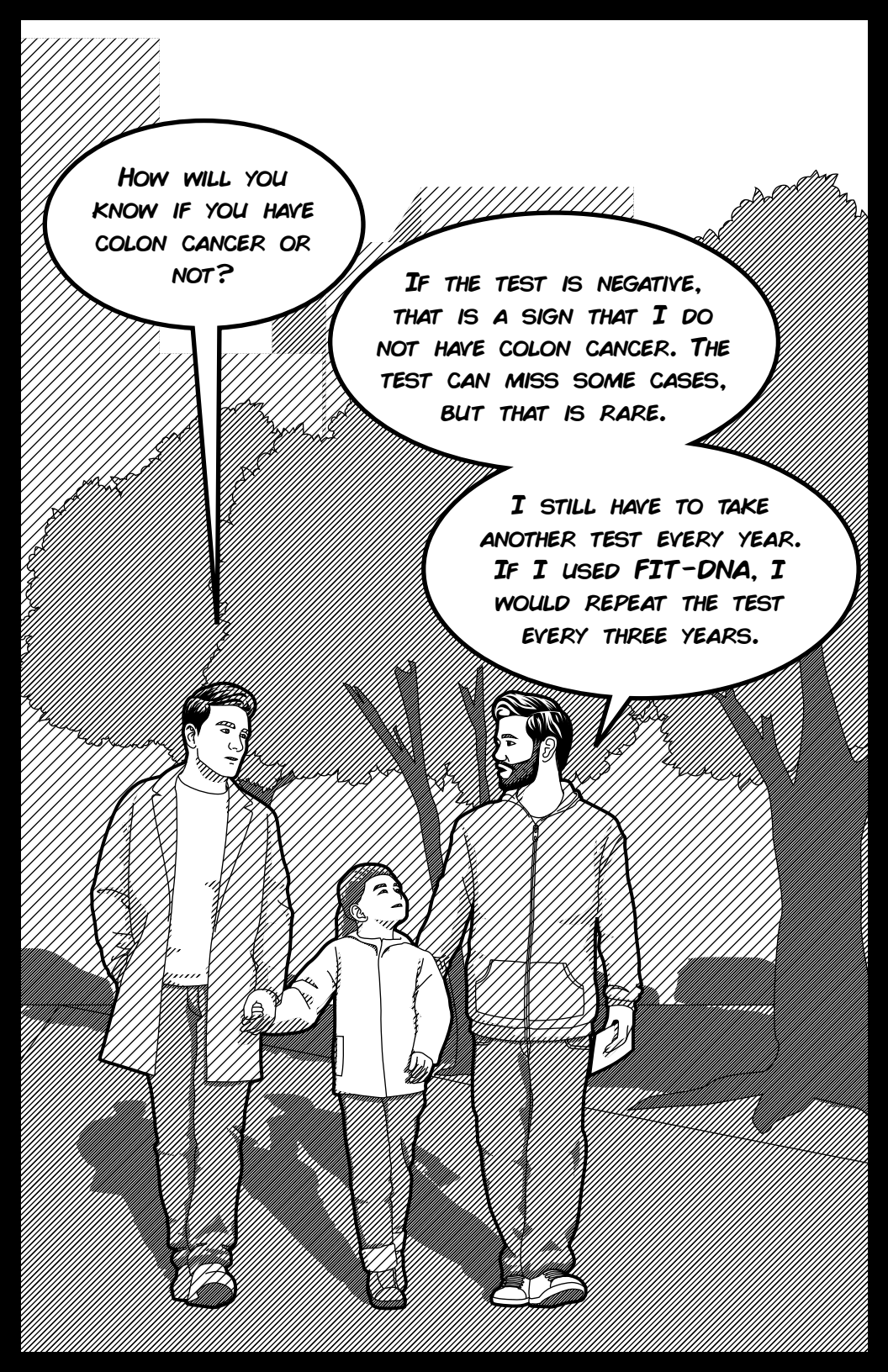


CAN I COME?



SURE, LILY. LET'S GO TOGETHER.





HOW WILL YOU  
KNOW IF YOU HAVE  
COLON CANCER OR  
NOT?

IF THE TEST IS NEGATIVE,  
THAT IS A SIGN THAT I DO  
NOT HAVE COLON CANCER. THE  
TEST CAN MISS SOME CASES,  
BUT THAT IS RARE.

I STILL HAVE TO TAKE  
ANOTHER TEST EVERY YEAR.  
IF I USED FIT-DNA, I  
WOULD REPEAT THE TEST  
EVERY THREE YEARS.

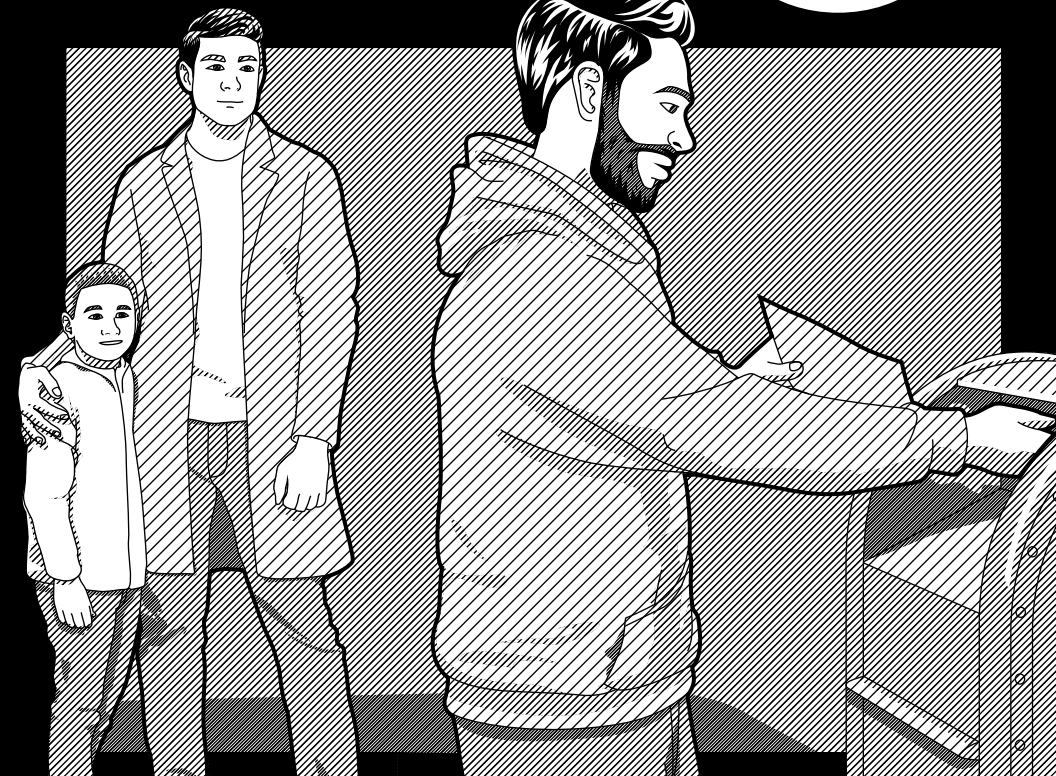
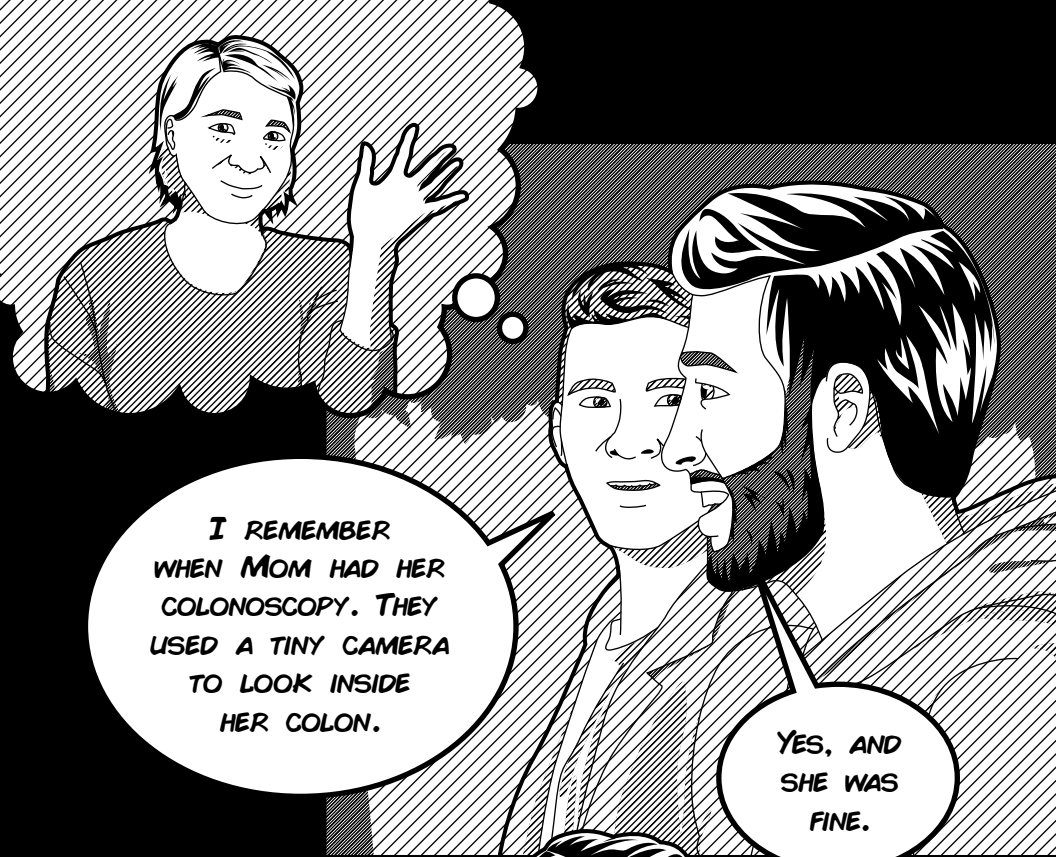


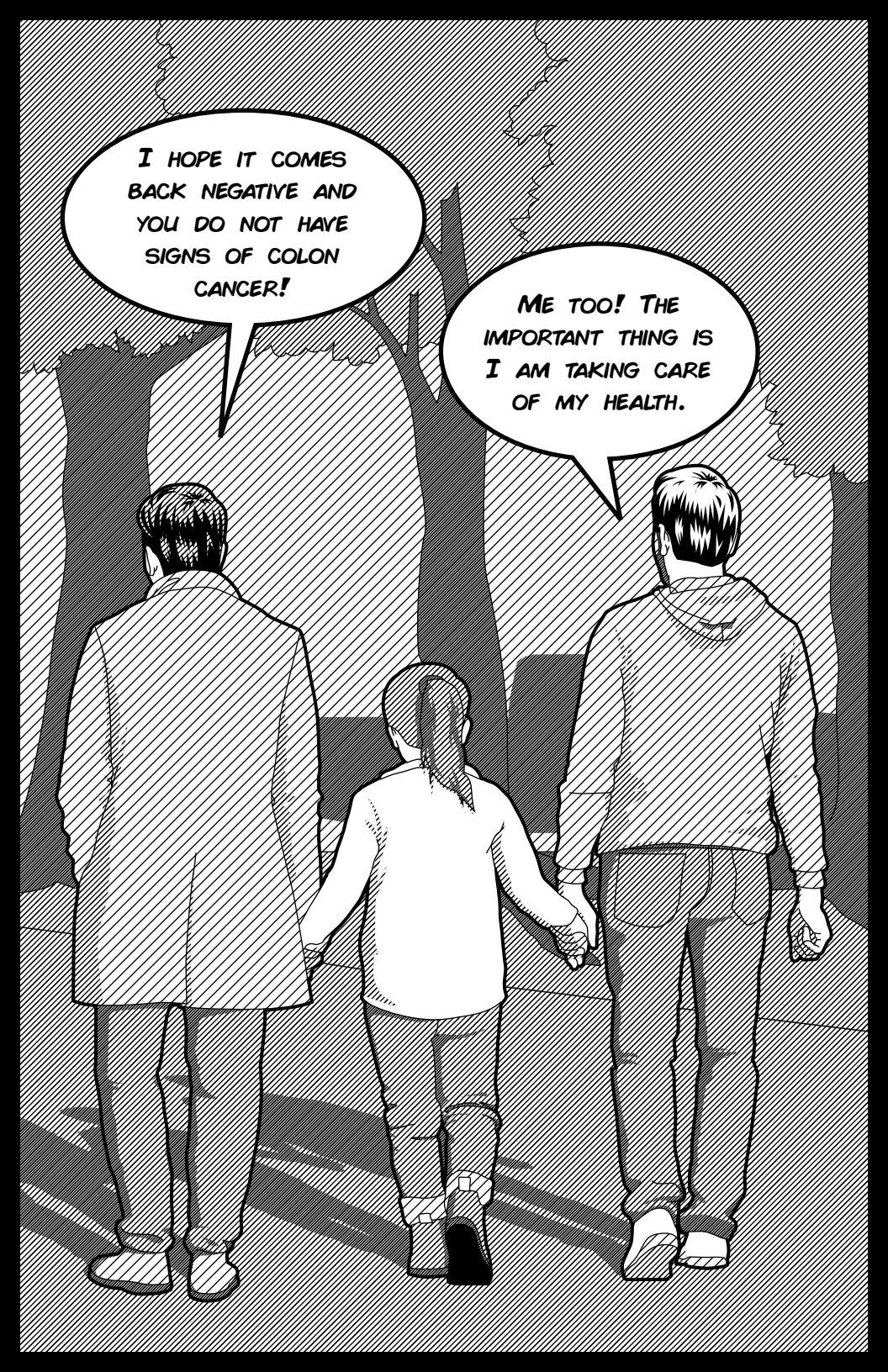
WHAT IF THE TEST  
FINDS SOMETHING?

MY HEALTH CARE  
PROVIDER WILL CONTACT  
ME. IT CAN MEAN  
CANCER IN MY COLON  
OR RECTUM, OR IT CAN  
MEAN SOMETHING ELSE IS  
WRONG.

I WOULD THEN NEED  
A COLONOSCOPY  
NEXT TO FIND OUT.







I HOPE IT COMES  
BACK NEGATIVE AND  
YOU DO NOT HAVE  
SIGNS OF COLON  
CANCER!

ME TOO! THE  
IMPORTANT THING IS  
I AM TAKING CARE  
OF MY HEALTH.

## Facts About Colon Cancer Risk

### Risk factors for colon cancer include:

- Being older — about 90% of cases occur in people age 50 and older\*
- Having a personal or family history of colon cancer or adenomatous polyps
- Having an inherited syndrome such as Lynch syndrome or familial adenomatous polyps (FAP)

### These lifestyle changes may lower your risk of colon cancer:

- Lowering your weight if you have overweight or obesity
- Increasing your physical activity by sitting less and moving more
- Eating fewer processed meats and more fruits and vegetables
- Drinking fewer alcoholic drinks, and not smoking
- Reducing or stopping tobacco use. For support to quit smoking or vaping, call 866-NY-QUITS (866-697-8487).

Talk to your health care provider today about your risks and screening for colon cancer.

To learn more, visit [nyc.gov/health/coloncancer](https://nyc.gov/health/coloncancer). For related stories about screening, click on **Sandra's Story** and **Mark's Decision**.

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\*People without risk factors should start screening at age 45, as colon cancer cases have been increasing among people younger than age 50. People with risk factors may need to start screening even earlier. Most insurance plans cover colon cancer screenings. However, coverage can vary. Check with your health care provider and insurer about coverage before your screening test. If you do not have insurance, you may be eligible for low- or no-cost coverage. Call **311** for free enrollment assistance.

