

# Medical Policy



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## Title: Virtual Colonoscopy / CT Colonography

### Professional

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Populations	Interventions	Comparators	Outcomes
Individuals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who are asymptomatic and undergoing colorectal cancer screening</li> </ul>	Interventions of interest are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Computed tomography colonography</li> </ul>	Comparators of interest are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Optical colonoscopy</li> <li>Sigmoidoscopy</li> <li>Fecal occult blood test</li> </ul>	Relevant outcomes include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall survival</li> <li>Disease-specific survival</li> <li>Test accuracy</li> <li>Test validity</li> <li>Treatment-related morbidity</li> </ul>
Individuals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With positive colorectal cancer screening tests or signs or symptoms of colorectal cancer</li> </ul>	Interventions of interest are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Computed tomography colonography</li> </ul>	Comparators of interest are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Optical colonoscopy</li> <li>Standard care without colonoscopy</li> </ul>	Relevant outcomes include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall survival</li> <li>Disease-specific survival</li> <li>Test accuracy</li> <li>Test validity</li> <li>Treatment-related morbidity</li> </ul>

**DESCRIPTION**

Computed tomography colonography (CTC), also known as virtual colonoscopy, is an imaging modality of the colon that has been investigated as an alternative to conventional endoscopic ("optical") colonoscopy. It has been most widely studied as an alternative screening technique for colon cancer, and for the diagnosis of colorectal cancer (CRC) in people with related symptoms and for other colorectal conditions.

**OBJECTIVE**

The objective of this policy is to determine whether computed tomography colonography improves the net health outcome in individuals who are asymptomatic being screened for colorectal cancer or have positive screening results for colorectal cancer.

**BACKGROUND**

Computed tomography colonography uses thin-section helical CT to generate high-resolution 2-dimensional axial images of the colon. Three-dimensional images, which resemble the endoluminal images obtained with conventional endoscopic colonoscopy, are then reconstructed offline. CTC has been investigated as an alternative to conventional endoscopic ("optical") colonoscopy. While CTC requires a full bowel preparation, similar to conventional colonoscopy, no sedation is required, and the examination is less time-consuming. However, the technique involves gas insufflation of the intestine, which may be uncomfortable to the patient, and training and credentialing of readers may be needed to achieve optimal performance.

**Indications**

Diseases of the colon and rectum for which CTC may be considered as a diagnostic or screening tool include CRC and precancerous conditions, diverticulosis and diverticulitis, and inflammatory bowel disease. The most widely studied use of CTC is as an alternative screening technique for colon cancer.

**REGULATORY STATUS**

Multiple CT devices, including multiple CTC devices, have been cleared by for marketing by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) through the 510(k) process. FDA product code: JAK.

**POLICY**

- A. Virtual colonoscopy / CT colonography may be considered **medically necessary** as a screening technique for colorectal cancer in average risk, asymptomatic individuals between the ages of 50 and 75 years when no other colorectal cancer screening has been performed during the recommended screening interval:
1. Guaiac-based fecal occult blood test in the past year, **OR**
  2. Fecal immunochemical test in the past year, **OR**
  3. Multitargeted stool DNA test in the past 3 years, **OR**
  4. Colonoscopy in the past 10 years, **OR**
  5. CT colonography in the past 5 years, **OR**
  6. Flexible sigmoidoscopy in the past 5 years.
- B. Virtual colonoscopy / CT colonography as a test for colorectal cancer is considered **medically necessary** in the following clinical situations:
1. In patients who failed to successfully complete a conventional colonoscopy (an inadequate prep does not constitute a failed colonoscopy); **OR**
  2. In patients who are not an appropriate candidate to safely perform a conventional colonoscopy, including, but not limited to,
    - a. those with a known colonic obstruction or stenosing lesions,
    - b. inability to perform colonoscopy because anticoagulant therapy cannot be discontinued,
    - c. high anesthesia risk.
- C. Except for the indications outlined in the policy statements above, virtual colonoscopy / CT colonography is considered **experimental / investigational**.

**Policy Guidelines**

1. Average risk of developing colorectal cancer include those individuals who have no personal history of adenomatous polyps, colorectal cancer, or inflammatory bowel disease, including Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis; no family history of colorectal cancers or adenomatous polyps, familial adenomatous polyposis, or hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer.
2. Asymptomatic individuals include those who have no signs or symptoms of colorectal disease including, but not limited to, lower gastrointestinal pain, blood in stool, positive guaiac fecal occult blood test or fecal immunochemical test.

## **RATIONALE**

The most recent literature review covers the period through July 26, 2018.

Evidence reviews assess whether a medical test is clinically useful. A useful test provides information to make a clinical management decision that improves the net health outcome. That is, the balance of benefits and harms is better when the test is used to manage the condition than when another test or no test is used to manage the condition.

The first step in assessing a medical test is to formulate the clinical context and purpose of the test. The test must be technically reliable, clinically valid, and clinically useful for that purpose. Evidence reviews assess the evidence on whether a test is clinically valid and clinically useful. Technical reliability is outside the scope of these reviews, and credible information on technical reliability is available from other sources.

### **Colon Cancer Screening**

#### **Clinical Context and Therapy Purpose**

The purpose of computed tomography colonography (CTC) in patients who are asymptomatic and undergoing colorectal cancer (CRC) screening to prevent morbidity by detecting early colon cancers and detecting and removing cancer precursors such as polyps. The detection of cancer and removal of polyps ultimately requires an optical colonoscopy. CTC is an imaging procedure that can identify cancers or polyps. The effectiveness and efficiency of CTC depends on its ability to identify cancer or polyps accurately, so that all or most patients who have such lesions are appropriately referred for optical colonoscopy for diagnosis and treatment.

The question addressed in this evidence review is: Does the use of CTC improve the net health outcome in patients who are asymptomatic and undergoing CRC screening?

The following PICOTS were used to select literature to inform this review.

#### **Patients**

The relevant population of interest is individuals who are asymptomatic and eligible for CRC screening.

#### **Interventions**

The test being considered is CTC.

#### **Comparators**

The following tests are currently being used to make decisions about managing patients who are asymptomatic and undergoing CRC screening: optical colonoscopy, sigmoidoscopy, and fecal occult blood test.

#### **Outcomes**

The outcomes of interest are disease-specific morbidity and mortality. Beneficial outcomes relate to true positive testing, which leads to detection of disease that would be otherwise missed. Harmful outcomes result from false-negative testing, which may delay diagnosis and management of CRC.

#### **Timing**

Follow-up immediately after test results is of interest for CTC test accuracy and validity and test-

related morbidity. Follow-up at 1 to 5 years is of interest for CRC outcomes for disease-specific mortality and morbidity.

### Setting

CRC would be performed in an outpatient setting or in a hospital or an imaging facility. Results of CTC are assessed by a radiologist.

### Study Selection Criteria

For the evaluation of clinical validity of the CTC test, studies that meet the following eligibility criteria were considered:

- Reported on the accuracy of the technology
- Included a suitable reference standard
- Patient clinical characteristics were described
- Patient selection criteria were described.

### Technically Reliable

Assessment of technical reliability focuses on specific tests and operators and requires review of unpublished and often proprietary information. Review of specific tests, operators, and unpublished data are outside the scope of this evidence review and alternative sources exist. This evidence review focuses on the clinical validity and clinical utility.

### Clinically Valid

A test must detect the presence or absence of a condition, the risk of developing a condition in the future, or treatment response (beneficial or adverse).

### Systematic Reviews

The diagnostic characteristics of CTC as a colon cancer screening test have been investigated in many studies in which patients referred for optical colonoscopy agreed first to undergo a CTC. Using a second-look unblinded colonoscopy aided by the results of the CTC as the reference standard, the diagnostic characteristics of CTC and the blinded colonoscopy can be calculated and compared. The sensitivity of CTC is a function of the size of the polyp; sensitivity is poorer for smaller polyps.

Lin et al (2016) published a systematic review and meta-analysis of the literature on CRC screening, conducted for the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force.<sup>1</sup> Reviewers identified 9 prospective diagnostic accuracy studies on CTC (total N=6497 patients). Seven studies involved CTC with bowel preparation and two involved CTC without bowel preparation. Five studies, including both without bowel preparation, were rated by U.S. Preventive Services Task Force as good quality and the remaining four were considered fair quality. In 4 studies of CTC with bowel preparation, the sensitivity to detect adenomas 6 mm or larger ranged from 73% to 98%, and the specificity ranged from 89% to 91%. The sensitivity of CTC to detect adenomas 10 mm or larger (7 studies) ranged from 67% to 94%, and the specificity ranged from 96% to 98%. Four (n=4821) of the 9 studies also provided data on colonoscopy. The sensitivity for adenomas 6 mm or larger ranged from 75% to 93%, and the sensitivity to detect adenomas 10 mm and larger ranged from 89% to 98%.

In addition, the Lin systematic review evaluated evidence on harms and extracolonic findings associated with CTC. Eleven fair or good quality prospective studies (total N=10,272 patients) suggested little or no risk of serious adverse events such as perforation. In contrast, reviewers

estimated that, with optical colonoscopy, the risk of perforation was 4 in 10,000 procedures (95% confidence interval [CI], 2 to 5 in 10,000) and the risk of major bleeding was 8 in 10,000 procedures (95% CI, 5 to 14 in 10,000). Radiation exposure is a potential harm of CTC, but many of the studies did not report the extent of radiation exposure. Using data from 4 studies, reviewers estimated that the radiation dose of a full-screening CTC examination was 4.5 to 7 mSv. However, in more recent studies (ie, published between 2004 and 2008), the estimated radiation dose was lower, at 1 to 5 mSv. Among studies reporting this outcome, extracolonic findings occurred in 27% to 69% of CTC examinations. Approximately 1% to 11% underwent diagnostic evaluation, and 3% required treatment. Extracolonic cancers occurred in about 0.5% of individuals undergoing CTC examinations.

Martin-Lopez et al (2014) published a meta-analysis that included 9 studies of CRC screening.<sup>2</sup> Studies conducted for the diagnosis of CRC or in elderly, high-risk, or symptomatic patients were excluded. The overall per-patient pooled sensitivity and specificity of CTC were 66.8% (95% CI, 62.7% to 70.8%) and 80.3% (95% CI, 77.7% to 82.8%), respectively. For colonoscopy, the pooled sensitivity was 92.5% (95% CI, 89.0% to 95%) and pooled specificity was 73.2% (95% CI, 67.7% to 78.1%). In the subgroup with larger lesions, the diagnostic accuracy of both approaches was less divergent. For lesions 10 mm or larger, CTC had a pooled sensitivity of 91.2% (95% CI, 86.5% to 94.6%) and a specificity of 87.3% (95% CI, 86.2% to 88.3%). The pooled sensitivity of colonoscopy for lesions 10 mm or larger was 92.9% (95% CI, 86.0% to 97.1%) and the specificity was 91.3% (95% CI, 89.9% to 92.5%).

#### Randomized Controlled Trials

Regge et al (2017) reported on a controlled trial in which 5412 individuals were randomized to CTC (n=2674) or flexible sigmoidoscopy (n=2738).<sup>3</sup> The detection rate for advanced adenomas did not differ significantly between groups (p=0.52). Detection rates were 133 (5.1%) in the CTC group and 127 (4.7%) in the flexible sigmoidoscopy group. Ten CRCs were identified in the CTC group and 9 in the flexible sigmoidoscopy group. No serious adverse events were reported.

Other large RCTs have compared the diagnostic accuracy of CTC with a different method of CRC screening. In the IJspeert et al (2016) trial, 8844 individuals were invited to be screened, and 2258 (26%) agreed to participate.<sup>4</sup> This included 982 (34%) of 2920 randomized to CTC and 1276 (22%) of 5924 randomized to standard colonoscopy. The analysis focused on the detection of high-risk sessile serrated polyps. Sessile serrated polyps were detected significantly more often in the colonoscopy examinations (n=55 [4.3%]) than in CTC examinations (n=8 [0.8%]). For the outcome of all sessile serrated polyps (high and low risk), significantly more were detected with the colonoscopy (n=83 [6.5%]) than with CTC (n=21 [2.1%]; p<0.001). Adverse events were not discussed.

#### Nonrandomized Trials

One of the largest studies of a screening population, the American College of Radiology Imaging Network trial, was published by Johnson et al (2008).<sup>5</sup> Patients underwent CTC prior to standard colonoscopy. The study used 16- to 64-row detector computed tomography scanners, stool-tagging techniques, and minimum training standards for interpreters of the test. A total of 2600 individuals were enrolled, and data were available for 2531 (97%) of them. Trial results showed 90% sensitivity of CTC for polyps 10 mm or larger and 86% specificity; positive and negative predictive values were 23% and 99%, respectively. In a follow-up analysis of the American College of Radiology Imaging Network trial, Fidler et al (2014) demonstrated that CTC had similar sensitivity and specificity in the detection of nonpolypoid adenomas.<sup>6</sup>

### Clinically Useful

A test is clinically useful if the use of the results informs management decisions that improve the net health outcome of care. The net health outcome can be improved if patients receive correct therapy, or more effective therapy, or avoid unnecessary therapy, or avoid unnecessary testing.

### Direct Evidence

Direct evidence of clinical utility is provided by studies that have compared health outcomes for patients managed with and without the test. Because these are intervention studies, the preferred evidence would be from RCTs.

No RCTs comparing outcomes for patients undergoing CTC screening with patients who did not undergo CTC screening were identified.

### Chain of Evidence

Indirect evidence on clinical utility rests on clinical validity. If the evidence is insufficient to demonstrate test performance, no inferences can be made about clinical utility.

A chain of evidence involves evaluating: (1) evidence that CTC is accurate and (2) evidence that CTC identifies appropriate patients with CRC who would not otherwise be screened. The clinical validity of CTC for screening for CRC has been demonstrated in systematic reviews and meta-analysis studies as well as several large RCTs. While modeling studies have reported that optical colonoscopy is likely more beneficial than CTC,<sup>7-13</sup> higher participation with CTC may ameliorate otherwise lower improvement in net health outcome compared with optical colonoscopy.

Compliance with recommendations for optical colonoscopy is suboptimal. As reported by Steele et al (2013), the screening rate is about 60% (in the prior 10 years) among people ages 50 to 75.<sup>14</sup> CTC has been proposed as an alternative colon cancer screening technique that may improve patient compliance compared with optical colonoscopy. A literature survey of studies that attempted to determine whether the availability of CTC would improve population screening rates found survey studies, patient satisfaction studies, and focus group studies. It is unclear how such studies provide a sufficient base of evidence to demonstrate that population adherence to colon cancer screening would improve through CTC.

Stoop et al (2012) published an RCT that evaluated the impact of CTC on colon cancer screening rates.<sup>15</sup> This trial was performed in the Netherlands, and members of the general population ages 50 to 75 years were randomized to an invitation for CTC or optical colonoscopy. The CTC protocol included a noncathartic preparation, consisting of iodinated contrast agent given the day before the exam and 1.5 hours before the exam, in conjunction with a low fiber diet. The participation rate in the CTC group was 34% (982/2920) compared with a rate of 22% (1276/5924) in the optical colonoscopy group ( $p < 0.001$ ). The diagnostic yield per-patient of advanced polyps was higher in the optical colonoscopy group, at 8.7 of 100 participants compared with 6.1 of 100 participants for CTC ( $p = 0.02$ ). However, the diagnostic yield of advanced neoplasia per invitee was similar, at 2.1 of 100 invitees for CTC and 1.9 of 100 invitees for optical colonoscopy ( $p = 0.56$ ). The data would suggest that the increased participation rates with CTC offset the advantages of optical colonoscopy and that overall outcomes would likely be similar between strategies. It is not known whether the different preparation regimens affected participation rates.

### *Section Summary: Colon Cancer Screening*

There is variability in the diagnostic accuracy of CTC in the literature; this is likely due to improvements in technical reliability over time. The most recent studies have reported that the diagnostic accuracy for CTC is high and in the same range as optical colonoscopy for polyps greater than 10 mm.

No long-term comparative studies have directly reported on outcomes of CTC vs optical colonoscopy. The determination of comparative outcomes of CTC and optical colonoscopy is complex, due to the differing patterns of follow-up associated with each strategy.

At least 1 well-conducted RCT indicated that CRC screening participation rates are improved with CTC in comparison with optical colonoscopy. The improved screening rate may offset, or even outweigh, any benefit of optical colonoscopy on outcomes. However, the available study used a noncathartic preparation, and it is not certain that similar screening rates would be achieved with a cathartic preparation.

### **Colon Cancer Diagnosis**

#### Clinical Context and Therapy Purpose

The purpose of CTC in patients who have positive CRC screening or signs and symptoms of CRC is to identify disease.

CTC has not generally been employed as a test to identify the disease in persons with positive cancer screening tests or symptoms because, compared with screening settings, the expected probability of disease is much higher. Findings on CTC require confirmation with colonoscopy; thus it would be inappropriate to use a noninvasive test if the probability of needing a confirmatory invasive test is high.

The question addressed in this evidence review is: Does the use of CTC improve the net health outcome in patients who have positive CRC screening tests or signs or symptoms of CRC?

The following PICOTS were used to select literature to inform this review.

#### Patients

The relevant populations of interest are individuals with positive CRC screening tests or signs or symptoms of CRC.

#### Interventions

The test being considered is CTC.

#### Comparators

The following tests are currently being used to make decisions about patients who have positive CRC screening or signs and symptoms of CRC: optical colonoscopy and standard care without a colonoscopy.

#### Outcomes

The outcomes of interest are disease-specific morbidity and mortality. Beneficial outcomes relate to true positive testing, which leads to detection of disease that would be otherwise missed. Harmful outcomes result from false-negative testing, which may delay diagnosis and management of CRC.

### Timing

Follow-up immediately after test results is of interest for CTC test accuracy and validity, as well as treatment-related morbidity; follow-up at 1 to 5 years is of interest for CTC outcomes for disease-specific morbidity or mortality.

### Setting

CTC is administered in an outpatient setting or in a hospital or an imaging facility. Results of CTC are assessed by a radiologist.

### Study Selection Criteria

For the evaluation of clinical validity of the CTC test, studies that meet the following eligibility criteria were considered:

- Reported on the accuracy of the technology
- Included a suitable reference standard
- Patient clinical characteristics were described
- Patient selection criteria were described.

### Technically Reliable

Assessment of technical reliability focuses on specific tests and operators and requires review of unpublished and often proprietary information. Review of specific tests, operators, and unpublished data are outside the scope of this evidence review and alternative sources exist. This evidence review focuses on the clinical validity and clinical utility.

### Clinically Valid

A test must detect the presence or absence of a condition, the risk of developing a condition in the future, or treatment response (beneficial or adverse).

### Systematic Reviews

Several studies have evaluated the role of CTC in the diagnosis of CRC in patients with symptoms or positive findings on other screening modalities (eg, fecal occult blood testing [FOBT]). Plumb et al (2014) published a systematic review and meta-analysis of studies evaluating the performance of CTC for the diagnosis of colon cancer among subjects with positive FOBT.<sup>16</sup> FOBT is a recommended screening technique for CRC; positive tests are typically followed by a colonoscopy. In this meta-analysis, reviewers included only studies that used CTC in the evaluation of patients who had had a positive FOBT and compared colonography results with a reference test, conventional colonoscopy, segmental unblinded colonoscopy, or surgery with subsequent histopathology. Five articles were analyzed, representing 4 studies with 622 patients. Pooled per patient sensitivity and specificity for adenomas 6 mm or larger or CRC were 88.8% (95% CI, 83.6% to 92.5%) and 75.4% (95% CI, 58.6% to 86.8%), respectively. Reviewers commented that data were limited on CTC for patients with a positive FOBT (only 4 studies) and based on the available evidence, CTC has a reasonably high sensitivity for detecting adenomas 6 mm or larger (88.8%; 95% CI, 83.6% to 92.5%) but a relatively low specificity 75.4%; 95% CI, 58.6% to 86.8%).

### Retrospective Studies

Simons et al (2013) evaluated the false-negative rate and sensitivity of CTC for CRC among patients who presented with symptoms of CRC.<sup>17</sup> The authors included 1855 consecutive patients who underwent CTC at a single center. These data were linked to a comprehensive population-based cancer registry to determine if patients were diagnosed with CRC in the 2 years after their

CTC. Fifty-three patients were diagnosed with CRC, of whom 40 patients had suspected CRC, 5 diagnosed with large polyps that appeared malignant on histology, and 5 diagnosed with an indeterminate mass on CTC. Two patients who developed cancer had not been diagnosed on CTC, and 1 patient who developed cancer had had an incomplete colonography. The overall sensitivity of CTC was 94.3% (95% CI, 88% to 100%).

Also, Plumb et al (2014) published findings of a retrospective study comparing results from CTC with optical colonoscopy in patients evaluated at a single center who were indicated for CRC diagnostic assessment because of a positive FOBT.<sup>18</sup> This study was not included in the Plumb 2014 review (described above). Based on the institutional protocol, optical colonoscopy was preferred for individuals with positive FOBT; however, CTC was substituted if the subject was unable to complete colonoscopic bowel preparation safely, was too frail or immobile to undergo colonoscopy (although potentially fit for necessary treatment), had another contraindication to colonoscopy, or had an incomplete colonoscopy. The study analyzed 2731 FOBT-positive patients screened with CTC as their first screening test. Of these, 1027 (37.6%) had CRC or polyps suspected (95% CI, 33.8% to 41.4%), and 911 underwent confirmatory testing. One hundred twenty-four (4.5%) were found to have CRC and 533 (19.5%) were found to have polyps, for an overall CRC- or polyp-detection rate of 24.1% (95% CI, 21.5% to 24.1%). The positive predictive value for CRC or polyps was 72.1% (95% CI, 66.6% to 77.6%). Colonoscopy data were available for 72,817 FOBT-positive patients who underwent colonoscopy as an initial screening test, among whom 9.0% had CRC, and 50.6% had polyps. The authors attributed the difference in CRC and polyp rates between the groups to underlying differences in risk between those referred for CTC and potential biases in the interpretation of screening guidelines.

#### Clinically Useful

A test is clinically useful if the use of the results informs management decisions that improve the net health outcome of care. The net health outcome can be improved if patients receive correct therapy, or more effective therapy, or avoid unnecessary therapy, or avoid unnecessary testing.

#### Direct Evidence

Direct evidence of clinical utility is provided by studies that have compared health outcomes for patients managed with and without the test. Because these are intervention studies, the preferred evidence would be from RCTs.

Several studies have evaluated the role of CTC for patients with symptoms suggestive of CRC. Atkin et al (2013) reported on the results of an unblinded RCT comparing colonoscopy with CTC in the evaluation of patients who had symptoms suggestive of CRC.<sup>19</sup> Given the challenges of conducting a trial that would be adequately powered to detect small differences between CTC and colonoscopy in CRC and large polyp detection, the authors used rates of the need for additional evaluation after CTC as a primary outcome, on the assumption that such rates would strongly affect the evaluation of the benefits of the procedure. The trial randomized patients ages 55 or older with symptoms suggestive of CRC in a 2:1 fashion to colonoscopy or CTC. Both colonoscopy and CTC procedures were conducted with a full bowel preparation. The trial's primary outcome was the proportion of patients who had an additional colonic investigation, defined as any subsequent examination of the colon until diagnosis (usually histologic confirmation of cancer or polyp) or until a patient was referred back to his or her physician. Additional diagnostic evaluation of the colon was required in 160 (30.0%) of 533 of those assigned to CTC compared with 86 (8.2%) of 1047 of those assigned to colonoscopy ( $p < 0.001$ ).

The overall detection rate for CRC or large polyps did not differ between the groups (relative risk, 0.95; 95% CI, 0.70 to 1.27;  $p=0.69$ ).

### Chain of Evidence

Indirect evidence on clinical utility rests on clinical validity. If the evidence is insufficient to demonstrate test performance, no inferences can be made about clinical utility.

Because the clinical validity of CTC for colon cancer diagnosis has not been established, a chain of evidence supporting the clinical utility of CTC for this population cannot be constructed.

### *Section Summary: CTC for Colon Cancer Diagnosis*

There is a relatively small number of studies of CTC for diagnosing CRC in patients with a positive screening test or with symptoms of CRC. A systematic review of CTC studies in patients with a positive FOBT identified only 4 studies and found a reasonably high sensitivity for detecting adenomas 6 mm or larger but a relatively low specificity. An RCT comparing CTC with colonoscopy in symptomatic patients found a significantly greater need for additional evaluation after CTC compared with colonoscopy. Because prevalence of the disease is much higher in patients with positive screening tests or symptoms of CRC, going directly to colonoscopy is usually the preferred clinical strategy. Additional studies are needed to determine with certainty the diagnostic accuracy of CTC for diagnosis of CRC; however, for patients unable to undergo a colonoscopy, based on the available evidence, CTC may be a reasonable option.

## **SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE**

For individuals who are asymptomatic and undergoing CRC screening who receive CTC, the evidence includes systematic reviews with meta-analysis, randomized and nonrandomized controlled trials, and modeling studies. Relevant outcomes are overall survival, disease-specific survival, test accuracy and validity, and treatment-related morbidity. The available evidence supports the conclusion that the diagnostic accuracy of CTC is in the same range as optical colonoscopy, with a moderate-to-high sensitivity and a high specificity for the detection of larger polyps and CRC. As a result, screening with CTC may provide similar diagnostic results to screening using conventional optical colonoscopy. Most modeling studies have reported that the overall health outcome benefits of a strategy that uses optical colonoscopy likely exceed the benefits of a strategy using CTC. However, these analyses assume equal participation rates in screening between the strategies. Participation in screening may be higher with CTC than with optical colonoscopy, and this may ameliorate or offset any improved outcomes associated with optical colonoscopy. The evidence is sufficient to determine that the technology results in a meaningful improvement in the net health outcome.

For individuals who have positive CRC screening tests or signs or symptoms of CRC who receive CTC, the evidence includes systematic reviews with meta-analysis, an RCT, and cohort studies. Relevant outcomes are overall survival, disease-specific survival, test accuracy and validity, and treatment-related morbidity. Using CTC on patients with suspected disease might be an inefficient testing strategy because CTC findings need to be confirmed with conventional colonoscopy. There are a small number of studies on CTC for diagnosis of CRC in patients with a positive screening test or with symptoms of CRC, and thus the diagnostic accuracy cannot be determined with certainty. Studies of patients with a positive fecal occult blood test have suggested a reasonably high sensitivity for detection of adenomas 6 mm or larger but a relatively low specificity. There are fewer studies of patients with CRC symptoms; the RCT found that significantly more patients required additional evaluation after CTC than after conventional

colonoscopy. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

### **PRACTICE GUIDELINES AND POSITION STATEMENTS**

#### American College of Physicians

The American College of Physicians (ACP; 2012) updated its guidelines for colorectal cancer (CRC) screening.<sup>20</sup> ACP made the following recommendations on colon cancer screening:

“ACP recommends using a stool based test, flexible sigmoidoscopy, or optical colonoscopy as a screening test in patients who are at average risk. ACP recommends using optical colonoscopy as a screening test in patients who are at high risk. Clinicians should select the test based on the benefits and harms of the screening test, availability of the screening test, and patient preferences.”

The guidelines further noted that computed tomography colonography (CTC) is an option for screening average-risk patients older than 50 years.

#### American Cancer Society et al

The American Cancer Society (2018) updated its guidelines on CRC screening (see Table 1).<sup>21</sup> ACS made the following recommendations on colon cancer screening:

“The ACS recommends that adults aged 45 years and older with an average risk of colorectal cancer undergo regular screening with either a high-sensitivity stool-based test or a structural (visual) examination, depending on patient preference and test availability....The recommendation to begin screening at age 45 years is a qualified recommendation. The recommendation for regular screening in adults aged 50 years and older is a strong recommendation.”

CTC was listed as an option for CRC screening (see Table 1) and was acknowledged to have comparable sensitivity and specificity to a colonoscopy. Stated limitations associated with CTC included exposure to low-dose radiation as well as complications of a full bowel preparation, including rare cases of bowel perforation. It remains unclear whether incidental detection of extracolonic findings during CTC provides net benefit or harm to patients.

**Table 1.** Guidelines on Colorectal Cancer Screening Options

<b>Colorectal Cancer Screening Guidelines</b>	
<b>Stool-based test</b>	
	Fecal immunochemical test every 1 y
	High-sensitivity, guaiac-based fecal occult blood test every 1 y
	Multitarget stool DNA test every 3 y
<b>Structural test</b>	
	Colonoscopy every 10 y
	Computer tomography colonography every 5 y

#### American College of Gastroenterology

The American College of Gastroenterology (2017) published recommendations of the U.S. Multi-Society Task Force of Colorectal Cancer made up of expert gastroenterologists from the American College of Gastroenterology, the American Gastroenterological Association, and the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy.<sup>22</sup> The panel recommended CRC screening beginning at age 50 with adjustments based on race and family history using a ranked-tiered CRC screening approach in Table 2. Considerations for recommending the tiered system of current CRC screening tests included performance, cost, patient acceptance, and the lack of randomized trial results that directly compare the effects of different tests on CRC incidence or mortality.

**Table 2.** Colorectal Cancer Screening Tier Strategy

Tier	Recommendation
Tier 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Colonoscopy every 10 y</li> <li>Annual fecal immunochemical test</li> </ul>
Tier 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Computed tomography colonography every 5 y</li> <li>Fecal immunochemical test–fecal DNA every 3 y</li> <li>Flexible sigmoidoscopy every 10 y (or every 5 y)</li> </ul>
Tier 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capsule colonoscopy every 5 y</li> </ul>
Available tests not currently recommended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Septin 9</li> </ul>

### European Society of Gastrointestinal Endoscopy et al

The European Society of Gastrointestinal Endoscopy and European Society of Gastrointestinal and Abdominal Radiology (2014) issued guidelines on the use of CTC.<sup>23</sup> These guidelines recommended CTC as outlined in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Guidelines on Use of CTC

Recommendation	SOR	QOE
ESGE/ESGAR recommend CTC as the radiologic examination of choice for the diagnosis of colorectal neoplasia	Strong	High
ESGE/ESGAR do not recommend barium enema in this setting	Strong	High
ESGE/ESGAR recommend CTC, preferably the same or next day, if colonoscopy is incomplete. Delay of CTC should be considered following endoscopic resection. In the case of obstructing colorectal cancer, preoperative contrast-enhanced CTC may also allow location or staging of malignant lesions.	Strong	Moderate
When endoscopy is contraindicated or not possible, ESGE/ESGAR recommend as an acceptable and equally sensitive alternative for patients with symptoms suggestive of colorectal cancer	Strong	High
ESGE/ESGAR do not recommend CTC as a primary test for population screening or in individuals with a positive first-degree family history of CRC. However, it may be proposed as a CRC screening test on an individual basis providing the screenee is adequately informed about test characteristics, benefits, and risks.	Weak	Moderate

CRC: colorectal cancer; CTC: computed tomography colonography; ESGAR: European Society of Gastrointestinal and Abdominal Radiology; ESGE: European Society of Gastrointestinal Endoscopy; QOE: quality of evidence; SOR: strength of recommendation.

### American College of Radiology

The American College of Radiology (2018) updated its 2014 appropriateness criteria on imaging tests for CRC screening.<sup>24,25</sup> While CTC was not recommended for screening of patients at high risk for CRC, was appropriate for screening in the following populations:

- Average-risk individual, >50 years old
- Moderate-risk individual with a first-degree family history of cancer or adenoma
- Average-, moderate-, or high-risk individual with incomplete colonoscopy.

CTC was also appropriate for CRC detection in moderate-risk individuals, and in average-risk individuals after positive fecal screening tests (fecal occult blood test or fecal immunochemical test).

### **U.S. PREVENTIVE SERVICES TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS**

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) published updated recommendations on CRC screening in 2016.<sup>26</sup> The recommendations are:

- Adults 50 to 75 years old:  
"The USPSTF recommends screening for colorectal cancer starting at age 50 years and continuing until age 75 years." (Grade A)
- Adults 76 to 85 years old:  
"The decision to screen for colorectal cancer in adults aged 76 to 85 years should be an individual one, taking into account the patient's overall health and prior screening history.

- Adults in this age group who have never been screened for colorectal cancer are more likely to benefit.
- Screening would be most appropriate among adults who 1) are healthy enough to undergo treatment if colorectal cancer is detected and 2) do not have comorbid conditions that would significantly limit their life expectancy.” (Grade C)

In a section on clinical considerations, USPSTF stated that evidence on CTC is limited to studies on test characteristics and that CTC can result in incidental extracolonic findings. USPSTF also noted indirect harms resulting from standard colonoscopy performed for positive CTC findings.

The 2016 USPSTF recommendations did not include a specific statement on screening with CTC.

### ONGOING AND UNPUBLISHED CLINICAL TRIALS

Some currently unpublished trials that might influence this policy are listed in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Summary of Key Trials

NCT No.	Trial Name	Planned Enrollment	Completion Date
<b>Ongoing</b> NCT01651624	Comparison Between Faecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT), Computed Tomographic Colonography (CTC) With Computer Aided Diagnosis (CAD) and Colonoscopy as a Primary Screening Test for Colorectal Cancer	14,000	Dec 2018

NCT: national clinical trial

### **CODING**

**The following codes for treatment and procedures applicable to this policy are included below for informational purposes. Inclusion or exclusion of a procedure, diagnosis or device code(s) does not constitute or imply member coverage or provider reimbursement. Please refer to the member's contract benefits in effect at the time of service to determine coverage or non-coverage of these services as it applies to an individual member.**

#### CPT/HCPCS

- 74261 Computed tomographic (CT) colonography, diagnostic, including image postprocessing; without contrast material
- 74262 Computed tomographic (CT) colonography, diagnostic, including image postprocessing; with contrast material(s) including non-contrast images, if performed
- 74263 Computed tomographic (CT) colonography, screening, including image postprocessing

#### ICD-10 Diagnoses

- C18.0 Malignant neoplasm of cecum
- C18.1 Malignant neoplasm of appendix
- C18.2 Malignant neoplasm of ascending colon
- C18.3 Malignant neoplasm of hepatic flexure
- C18.4 Malignant neoplasm of transverse colon
- C18.5 Malignant neoplasm of splenic flexure
- C18.6 Malignant neoplasm of descending colon

C18.7	Malignant neoplasm of sigmoid colon
C18.8	Malignant neoplasm of overlapping sites of colon
C19	Malignant neoplasm of rectosigmoid junction
C78.5	Secondary malignant neoplasm of large intestine and rectum
D01.0	Carcinoma in situ of colon
D01.2	Carcinoma in situ of rectum
D37.4	Neoplasm of uncertain behavior of colon
D37.5	Neoplasm of uncertain behavior of rectum
Z12.10	Encounter for screening for malignant neoplasm of intestinal tract, unspecified
Z12.11	Encounter for screening for malignant neoplasm of colon
Z12.12	Encounter for screening for malignant neoplasm of rectum
Z80.0	Family history of malignant neoplasm of digestive organs

**REVISIONS**

12-31-2009	<p>Updated Description section.</p> <p>In Policy section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Removed "Virtual colonoscopy/CT colonography as a screening test for colorectal polyps is considered experimental/investigational.</li> </ul> <p>Virtual colonoscopy/CT colonography screening for colorectal cancer is considered medically necessary as an alternative to colonoscopy when the patient has failed a colonoscopy AND the patient is at higher than average risk for colorectal cancer based on one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Personal history of resected colorectal cancer; OR</li> <li>▪ Prior history of adenomatous polyps; OR</li> <li>▪ Older unscreened relatives of an individual with newly diagnosed Familial Adenomatous Polyposis (FAP) but who do not have specific genetic evidence or clinical manifestations of the disease; OR</li> <li>▪ Patients with a genetic or clinical diagnosis of Hereditary Non Polyposis Colorectal Cancer (HNPCC), OR</li> <li>▪ Inflammatory bowel disease OR</li> <li>▪ Family history of colorectal cancer or adenomas as evidenced by ANY ONE of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ One first degree relative with colorectal cancer or adenoma diagnosed &lt; age 60; OR</li> <li>➢ Multiple (2 or more) first degree relatives with colorectal cancer or adenomas at any age; OR</li> <li>➢ One or more first degree relatives with colorectal cancer or adenoma diagnosed &gt; age 60, or two second degree relatives."</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Added the policy liberalization of, "Virtual colonoscopy / CT colonography as a test for colorectal cancer is considered not medically necessary, except when the patient failed to successfully complete a colonoscopy."</li> </ul> <p>Added Rationale section.</p> <p>In Coding Section (effective 01/01/2010):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Added CPT Codes: 74261, 74262, 74263</li> <li>▪ Removed CPT Codes: 0066T, 0067T</li> </ul>
10-08-2010	<p>Updated Policy Language</p> <p>In the policy language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Removed "screening" to read "Virtual colonoscopy / CT Colonography as a test for colorectal cancer is considered not medically necessary, except when the patient: ..."</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inserted "A. Failed to successfully complete a colonoscopy (an inadequate prep does not constitute a failed colonoscopy)."; "B. when a patient is not an appropriate candidate to safely perform a colonoscopy."</li> <li>▪ Inserted "Examples of conditions where the patient might not be an appropriate candidate to safely perform a colonoscopy are as follows, but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--Known colonic obstruction or stenosing lesions</li> <li>--Inability to perform colonoscopy because anticoagulant therapy cannot be discontinued</li> <li>--High anesthesia risk for the patient"</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
09-17-2013	Updated Description section.
	Updated Rationale section.
	In Coding section: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Added ICD-10 Diagnosis codes (<i>Effective October 1, 2014</i>)</li> </ul>
	Updated Reference section.
02-16-2015	Updated Description section.
	Updated Rationale section.
	In Coding section: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Changed ICD-10 Diagnoses Effective date to October 1, 2015.</li> </ul>
	Updated References section.
07-21-2015	Updated Description section.
	Updated Rationale section.
	Updated References section.
10-01-2016	In Coding section: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Added ICD-10 codes effective 10-01-2016: K52.21, K52.22, K52.29, K52.3, K52.83, K52.831, K52.832, K52.838, K52.839, K58.1, K58.2, K58.8, K59.31, K59.39</li> <li>▪ Termed ICD-10 codes effective 09-30-2016: K52.2, K59.3</li> </ul>
10-26-2016	Updated Description section.
	Updated Rationale section.
	Updated References section.
10-25-2017	Updated Description section.
	In Policy section: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Previous policy language was removed: A. Virtual colonoscopy / CT colonography as a test for colorectal cancer is considered not medically necessary, except when the patient: 1. Failed to successfully complete a colonoscopy (an inadequate prep does not constitute a failed colonoscopy); OR 2. When a patient is not an appropriate candidate to safely perform a colonoscopy. B. Examples of conditions where the patient might not be an appropriate candidate to safely perform a colonoscopy are as follows, but not limited to: 1. Known colonic obstruction or stenosing lesions 2. Inability to perform colonoscopy because anticoagulant therapy cannot be discontinued 3. High anesthesia risk for the patient</li> <li>▪ The following language was added: A.Virtual colonoscopy / CT colonography may be considered medically necessary as a screening technique for colorectal cancer in average risk, asymptomatic individuals between the ages of 50 and 75 years when no other colorectal cancer screening has been performed during the recommended screening interval: 1. Guaiac-based fecal occult blood test in the past year, OR 2. Fecal immunochemical test in the past year, OR 3. Multitargeted stool DNA test in the past 3 years, OR 4. Colonoscopy in the past 10 years, OR 5. CT colonography in the past 5 years, OR 6. Flexible sigmoidoscopy in the past 5 years.</li> <li>▪ Added Policy Guidelines.</li> </ul>
	Updated Rationale section.
	Updated References section.
12-20-2018	Policy published to the bcbsks.com website on 11-20-2018 with an effective date of 12-20-2018.

Updated Description section.
In Policy section: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Added new Item B, "Virtual colonoscopy / CT colonography as a test for colorectal cancer is considered medically necessary in the following clinical situations: 1. In patients who failed to successfully complete a conventional colonoscopy (an inadequate prep does not constitute a failed colonoscopy); OR 2. In patients who are not an appropriate candidate to safely perform a conventional colonoscopy, including, but not limited to, a. those with a known colonic obstruction or stenosing lesions, b. inability to perform colonoscopy because anticoagulant therapy cannot be discontinued, c. high anesthesia risk."</li> <li>▪ Added new Item C, "Except for the indications outlined in the policy statements above, virtual colonoscopy / CT colonography is considered experimental / investigational."</li> </ul>
Updated Rationale section.
In Coding section: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Removed ICD-9 codes.</li> <li>▪ Added ICD-10 codes: Z12.10, Z12.12, Z80.0.</li> <li>▪ Removed ICD-10 codes: D12.0, D12.1, D12.2, D12.3, D12.4, D12.5, D12.7, D12.8, D12.9, D37.1, D37.2, D37.3, K50.10, K50.111, K50.112, K50.113, K50.114, K50.118, K51.00, K51.011, K51.012, K51.013, K51.014, K51.018, K51.20, K51.211, K51.212, K51.213, K51.214, K51.218, K51.30, K51.311, K51.312, K51.313, K51.314, K51.318, K51.40, K51.411, K51.412, K51.413, K51.414, K51.418, K51.50, K51.511, K51.512, K51.513, K51.514, K51.518, K51.80, K51.811, K51.812, K51.813, K51.814, K51.818, K51.90, K51.911, K51.912, K51.913, K51.914, K51.918, K52.0, K52.1, K52.21, K52.22, K52.29, K52.3, K52.83, K52.831, K52.832, K52.838, K52.839, K52.89, K57.20, K57.21, K57.30, K57.31, K57.32, K57.33, K57.40, K57.41, K57.50, K57.51, K57.52, K57.53, K57.80, K52.92, K58.0, K58.1, K58.2, K58.8, K58.9, K59.31, K59.39, K62.0, K62.1, K62.2, K62.3, K62.5, K63.5, Z86.010.</li> </ul>
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