

Understanding Cancer Screening for Women with Spinal Cord Injury in South Carolina

Summary

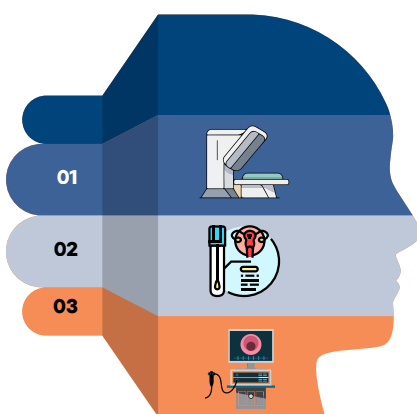
- > This fact sheet summarizes self-reported information from women living with spinal cord injury (SCI) in South Carolina who completed our survey between 2023 and 2024.
- > Cancer screening helps find cancer early, when treatment works best.
- > Breast cancer screening appears to be well established among women with SCI.
- > Cervical cancer screening shows gaps in use, indicating a need for clearer guidance and support.
- > Colorectal cancer screening is occurring for many women, but participation and awareness are uneven.
- > Women with SCI deserve accessible, respectful, and supportive screening care.



What is Cancer Screening?

Cancer screening involves testing for cancer before symptoms appear. Regular screening can help detect cancers such as breast, cervical, and colorectal cancer early, when treatment is most effective.

What cancer screenings are recommended for women? ¹



01 Breast Cancer Screening

A mammogram uses low-dose X-rays to look for breast cancer early, often before it can be felt.
Recommended every 1–2 years for women ages 40 to 74.

02 Cervical Cancer Screening

Pap (cell test) and HPV (virus test) examine the cervix (the opening of the uterus) to find early changes that can cause cancer.
Recommended for ages 21 to 65, with the test type based on age.

03 Colon and Rectal Cancer Screening

Tests that look for early signs of cancer or abnormal growths in the large intestine before symptoms appear.
Recommended for adults ages 45 to 75 who are at average risk.

Breast Cancer Screening Results

About Our Data

Our data are based on 50 adult women with SCI and valid data, ages 40 to 74, who completed a self-reported survey as part of a longitudinal study conducted between 2023 and 2024.

Mammogram Use Was High



About 9 out of 10 women (92%)

Most women who knew their screening history had received a mammogram, showing that breast cancer screening is reaching many women with SCI. For context, about 8 in 10 women ages 50–74 nationwide are up to date with mammography. ²



How recent was the last mammogram? Usually within the past **2 years**

Why Screening Timing Matters

National guidelines recommend a mammogram every 2 years. Following this schedule helps avoid long gaps in screening and supports timely follow-up if changes are found. ³

Cervical Cancer Screening: What Women Reported

The following findings are based on 51 women with SCI, ages 21 to 65, who provided clear answers on a self-reported survey collected between 2023 and 2024.

Screening Reached Half of Women



Just over half of women reported ever having a cervical cancer screening test. Nearly the same number reported never having been screened, pointing to an important gap in preventive care. Nationally, about 3 out of 4 women (75%) ages 21–65 are up to date with cervical cancer screening.²

What the Data Tells Us

Unlike breast cancer screening, cervical screening was less consistent among women with SCI. This difference may reflect barriers such as access to exams, discomfort, uncertainty about need for screening, or lack of clear guidance from providers.

What Tests Were Used?



- Most women (84%) received a Pap test, which looks for abnormal cells on the cervix.
- About 1 in 3 women (33%) received an HPV test, which checks for the human papillomavirus that can cause cervical cancer.

How recent was the last cervical cancer screening? On average 2½ years ago

 Why Screening Timing Matters

National guidelines recommend cervical cancer screening every 3 years with a Pap test, or every 5 years with HPV testing (or both together), depending on age and test type.³ Following these intervals helps balance regular monitoring with avoiding unnecessary testing, while still allowing enough time to catch changes before they become serious.

Colorectal Cancer Screening

These findings reflect colorectal cancer screening experiences among 50 women with SCI ages 45 to 75.

Most Women Had Some Type of Screening



Colonoscopy was by far the most frequently reported screening test with 6 in 10 women (64%). Colonoscopy is often considered the most complete test because it allows providers to look directly at the colon and remove growths if needed. Nationally, nearly 7 in 10 women (67%) ages 45–75 are up to date with colorectal cancer screening.⁴

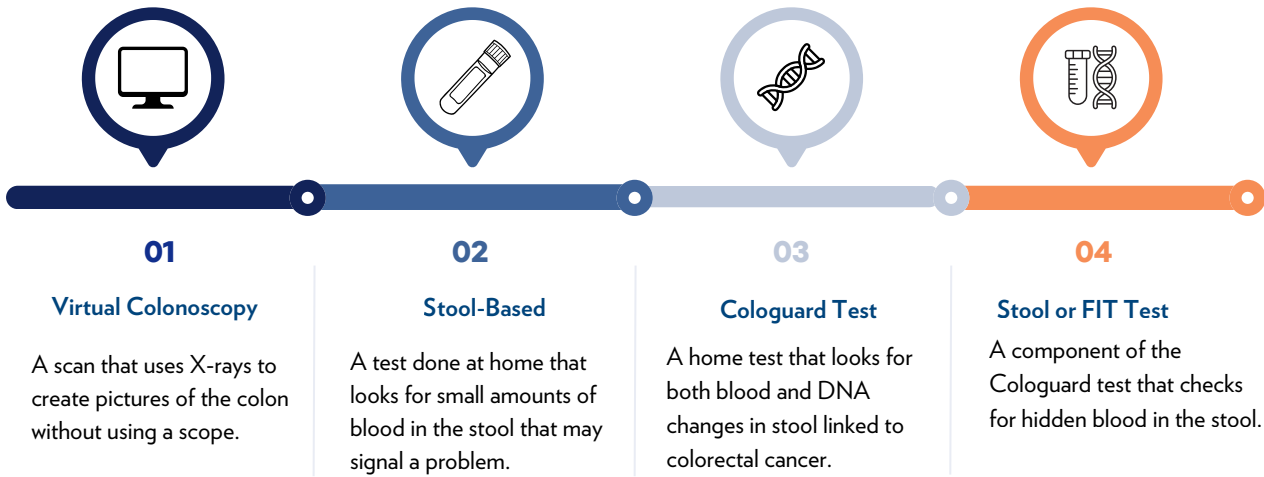
Know Your Options



There is more than one way to get screened for colorectal cancer.

Different tests are done in different places, and some can even be completed at home or in convenient settings.

Colorectal Cancer Screening Options ⁵



References

1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Cancer screening tests. Accessed December 15, 2025. <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/prevention/screening.html>

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3 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Screening for breast cancer. Accessed December 15, 2025. <https://www.cdc.gov/breast-cancer/screening/index.html>

4 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Screening for cervical cancer. Accessed December 15, 2025. <https://www.cdc.gov/cervical-cancer/screening/index.html>

5 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Colorectal cancer screening. 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/pdf/colorectal-cancer-screening-fact-sheet-508.pdf>

About This Fact Sheet

This fact sheet was created using data from the Health, Employment, and Longevity Project (HELP) outcomes database at the Center for Rehabilitation Research in Neurological Conditions (CRRNC). It is supported by the South Carolina SCI Research Fund (grant SCIRF 2017 SI-02). This fact sheet is not meant to replace the advice of your physician or other healthcare provider. You should always consult your physician or healthcare provider before making changes to behavior, treatment, or use of medicine.

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