Figure 2. Choosing the Right Test

### Choosing the right test

**Do You Have:**
- Family history of colorectal cancer or polyps?
- Personal history of colorectal cancer or polyps or inflammatory bowel disease?

**Are you:**
- Age 50 – 75 years old?

- If yes, colonoscopy
  - Provider and patient determine if testing should be started before age 50.

- If no and younger than 50 years:
  - Testing is not recommended.

- If no and older than 75 years:
  - Provider and patient decide if testing is needed.

### FOBT/FIT†

**Key facts**
- Reduces death from colorectal cancer
- Safe, available, and easy to complete
- Done on your own at home and returned
- Finds cancer early by finding blood in the stool
- Finds most cancers early when done every year

**Things to consider**
- May produce positive test results, even when no polyps or cancer are in the colon
- When the test is positive colonoscopy is required
- Person testing themselves comes into brief close contact with stool samples on a test kit

† Guaiac Fecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT) or Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT)

### Colonoscopy

**Key facts**
- Reduces death from colorectal cancer
- Can prevent cancer by removing polyps (or abnormal growths in the colon) during test
- Examines entire colon
- Finds most cancers or polyps that are present at the time of the test
- Done every 10 years if no polyps are found

**Things to consider**
- Stomach pain, gas or bloating is possible before, during or after test
- Must be performed at a hospital or clinic, usually with sedation or anesthesia, and someone must go with the person to take him or her home after the test
- A clear liquid diet is required before test
- Must take medication that will cause loose bowel movements to clean out the colon prior to test
- Likely needs to take a day off work/activities
- Small risk of serious complications (for example, bleeding or perforated colon)

*Flexible sigmoidoscopy may not be readily available and has largely been replaced by colonoscopy in the US.

† FOBT should be high-sensitivity gFOBT, such as Hemoccult Sensa