

Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

March 28, 2011 issue
Sensia Healthcare
www.sensiahealthcare.com
(414) 359-0800

Colorectal cancer screening saves lives. If everyone aged 50 years and older was screened regularly, 60% of cancer deaths could be prevented. Colorectal cancer (cancer of the colon and rectum) is the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths among men and women in the United States. Approximately 148,000 new cases of colon cancer are diagnosed annually resulting in close to 50,000 deaths. The risk of developing colon cancer increases with age. Over 90% of colon cancer cases occur in people over the age of 50.



Colon cancer is a slow growing cancer that usually takes years to develop. Screening tests, such as a colonoscopy, can identify precancerous polyps, which can be removed before they develop into cancer. Screening can also detect cancer at early stages, when treatment works best. Many health insurance plans are now covering all or part of colonoscopy testing so check with your employer to find out if this is a covered benefit.

Some studies have found that staying physically active and maintaining a healthy weight may lower risk for colon cancer. Medical experts also recommend limiting saturated fat sources like red meats and consuming more plant-based foods like fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains. The American Institute of Cancer Research recommends that people limit red meats to less than 18 ounces per week. Red meats include beef, pork, veal, lamb, sausages, bacon, lunchmeats and hot dogs. White meats such as chicken, turkey, fish or tofu, dried beans and lentils, can be substituted for red meats in most recipes. Researchers are also investigating the role of certain medications and supplements such as aspirin, calcium, Vitamin D and selenium in lowering risk for colorectal cancer.

See your doctor if you have any symptoms such as a change in bowel habits, frequent diarrhea, nausea, vomiting or stomach discomfort, bloody or narrow stools, unexplained weight loss or constant fatigue. If you are age 50 or older, talk with your doctor about getting screened, even if you have no symptoms. The most effective way to decrease your risk is by having routine colorectal cancer screening tests starting at age 50 (or earlier if you have inflammatory bowel disease or if you or a close relative have had colon polyps or colorectal cancer.) The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends screening for all people until they reach 75 years or longer based on their personal history and doctor recommendation.

For more information, go to www.cancer.gov or call 1-800-4-CANCER.

Source: *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*