

Don't Put Off Colon Cancer Screening

(NAPSA)—While colon cancer is the third-leading cancer killer in the United States, it is also a preventable and treatable disease—if diagnosed in its early stages.

If you are turning 50, don't put off colon cancer screening. While March is officially National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, any time is a good time to learn the facts about colon cancer prevention.

Silent Killer

Colon cancer, also known as colorectal cancer, takes the lives of more than 50,000 Americans each year. It's a silent killer because often there are no symptoms until it is too late to treat. Age is the single largest risk factor for the disease. Most colon cancers arise from precancerous growths in the colon called polyps, which can be found during a screening exam and removed before they turn into cancer.

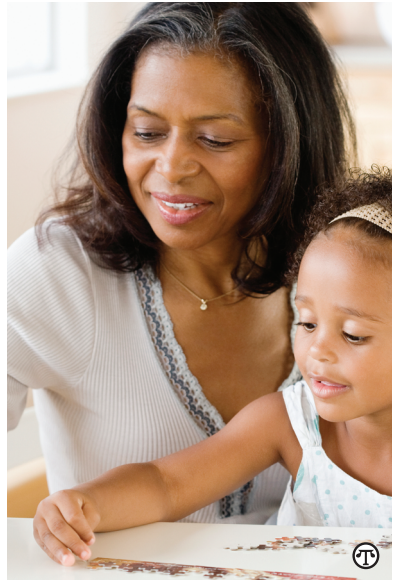
Screening Saves Lives

The American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE), representing the experts in colon cancer screening, recommends screening begin at age 50. A person at average risk with normal screening results won't need another exam for 10 years. If polyps or cancer is found, screening intervals should be more frequent. Colon cancer runs in families, so screening should begin sooner if there is a family history of polyps or colon cancer or if other risk factors are present. Some experts suggest African-Americans should begin screening at age 45.

Screening methods include colonoscopy, sigmoidoscopy, stool blood tests such as fecal occult blood test (FOBT) or fecal immunochemical test (FIT), stool DNA, CT colonography (virtual colonoscopy) and barium enema.

Colonoscopy

Colonoscopy is considered the preferred screening method because it is a preventive exam: It is the only test that both finds and removes precancerous polyps during the same exam. With other methods, if a polyp or other abnor-



Even people who lead a healthy lifestyle can develop colon cancer—but screening saves lives.

malty is found, the test must often be followed by a colonoscopy. Colonoscopy is a safe, effective and well-tolerated exam.

“ASGE encourages patients to get screened at intervals recommended by their doctor, to find a qualified endoscopist for their colonoscopy who has had specialized training in the procedure, and to carefully follow preparation instructions to ensure that the colon is thoroughly cleaned so that no polyps or cancers are missed during the procedure,” said ASGE President Thomas M. Deas, Jr., MD, MMM, FASGE. “A quality colonoscopy and appropriate follow-up exams save lives.”

Colon Cancer Facts

Begin screening at age 50; family history/other risk factors—screen before age 50; colonoscopy finds and removes polyps before they turn into cancer; highly treatable if caught early; bleeding or unexplained abdominal pain? Talk to your doctor immediately.

Learn More

Find more information on colon cancer prevention, including where to find a doctor, at www.screen4coloncancer.org.