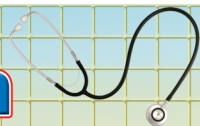


Health Bulletin



Colon Cancer: Preventable, Treatable And Beatable

(NAPSA)—Turning 50 means it's time to screen for colon cancer, but this might not be the highest item on your "to do" list. It should be, since colon cancer is largely preventable. Most colon cancers, also known as colorectal cancer, arise from precancerous growths in the colon called polyps, which can be found during a screening exam and removed before they turn into cancer.

Colon cancer, which takes the lives of more than 50,000 Americans each year, is considered 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, so even people who lead a healthy lifestyle can develop polyps and cancer. 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 will be more frequent. Colon cancer runs in families, so screening should begin sooner if a family history of polyps or colon cancer exists or if other risk factors are present.

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

Colon Cancer Prevention Tips:

- 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



(virtual colonoscopy), and barium enema. 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 the other methods, if a polyp is found, that test must then be followed by a colonoscopy to remove the polyp.

"Colonoscopy is safe, effective, well tolerated and can potentially save your life," said David A. Greenwald, M.D., FASGE, a gastroenterologist and spokesperson for the ASGE. "Both men and women are affected by colon cancer equally. Speak with your doctor about screening at 50 or to determine if you have any risk factors and need to begin screening sooner. Some experts suggest African-Americans should begin screening at age 45."

For more information on colon cancer prevention and to find a doctor, log on to ASGE's colon cancer awareness website www.screen4coloncancer.org.

Editor's Note: March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month but this information can be useful to your readers at any time.