



# HEALTH AWARENESS

## Colorectal Cancer Screening Saves Lives

(NAPSA)—Colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of cancer-related death in the United States. Each year, more than 58,000 people die from CRC and the American Cancer Society (ACS) estimates that more than 106,000 new cases are diagnosed each year. More than 76 million Americans are older than 50, yet it is estimated that only about half of them have been screened for CRC. Fortunately, CRC is one of the most preventable forms of cancer when caught early, which is why regular screening and early detection are vitally important in the fight against CRC.

Colorectal cancer originates in the lower gastrointestinal (GI) tract, and tends to develop slowly over time. CRC begins as a non-cancerous growth called an adenoma which, if left untreated, can develop into a cancerous polyp. Patients with early-stage CRC may not experience any symptoms at all—blood in the stool; unexplained anemia; unusual abdominal or gas pain; fatigue and vomiting—which is why the ACS recommends annual screening begin at age 50. CRC is highly treatable in its earliest stages. In fact, according to the ACS the five-year survival rate of early-detected CRC is 90 percent.

“Colonoscopy is considered the gold standard for colorectal cancer screening but it is not available to everyone and it certainly is not the only effective screening tool,” said Richard McCauley, MD, director of medical affairs at Beckman Coulter. “Among the effective screening tools recommended by

the ACS is the fecal occult blood test (FOBT), recommended annually for those over age 50.”

An FOBT is a simple, at home and non-invasive test used to screen for blood in the lower GI tract. According to a study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, “Reducing Mortality

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from Colorectal Cancer by Screening for Fecal Occult Blood,” FOBTs have been shown to reduce mortality rates by up to 33 percent when compared to no screening at all. The testing process takes just minutes, over three consecutive days.

“I recommend (to my patients with no other risk factors than age) an annual FOBT with a follow-up colonoscopy if the FOBT detects blood in the GI tract, which may be the result of colorectal adenomas or cancer,” said McCauley. “Colorectal cancer is a real issue, not only for those over 50 but for people at any age with risk factors like family history of colorectal cancer or a diet high in fat. This cancer, if caught early has high cure rates and thus if we can increase the number of Americans participating in colorectal cancer screening we can dramatically decrease the number of CRC-related deaths.”

For more information on CRC, visit [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org). For more information on FOBT, talk to your doctor and visit [www.easycancerscreening.com](http://www.easycancerscreening.com).

