MARCH 2023

Colorectal Cancer, Kidney Cancer and Multiple Myeloma Awareness Month
National Nutrition Month
Triple Negative Breast Cancer Day | **Mar 3**
World Lymphedema Day | **Mar 6**
Anal Cancer Awareness Day | **Mar 21**

CREATING A Healthier You

Nutrition & Colorectal Cancer Prevention

Getting regular colorectal cancer screenings is one of the most powerful weapons for prevention, but proper nutrition may help protect your body from many types of cancer, especially cancer of the colon and/or rectum.

Tips to maintain a healthy diet:

- Try to fill two-thirds of your plate with vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans.
- Limit red meat like beef, pork and lamb and avoid processed meats like ham, bacon and hot dogs.
- Avoid or limit alcohol.
- Avoid sugary drinks.
- Limit salty foods.
- Get your vitamins and minerals from food rather than supplements.
- Achieve and maintain a healthy weight and BMI.

What you should know about colorectal cancer

Due to a combination of early screening and improved treatments, colorectal cancer survivorship has increased over the past 20 years.

At the same time, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports a "statistically significant" increase in younger adults diagnosed with the disease. This phenomenon spurred the U.S. Preventative Services Taskforce (USPSTF) in 2020 to recommend lowering the age to begin colorectal cancer screenings from 50 to 45. In doing so, the USPSTF, an independent body of medical experts tasked with making evidence-based recommendations about preventative clinical services, joined the American Cancer Society (ACS), which since 2018 has recommended starting screenings at age 45.

Several screening options are available, but a colonoscopy is considered the gold standard of colorectal cancer screening methods for its ability to view the entire colon and both detect and remove polyps in the same procedure. Its ability to remove polyps before they turn into cancer differentiates colonoscopies from other screening methods as the only test that may help prevent colorectal cancer. Other less-invasive methods for identifying abnormalities include stool DNA tests and visual exams that use X-ray imaging. While these procedures are adequate screening options for many people, they must be performed more frequently and may miss polyps that would otherwise be identified during a colonoscopy. For this reason, you should speak with your doctor about which screening option is most appropriate for you.

Screening tests are especially important because colorectal cancer may spread in the early stages without noticeable symptoms. By the time signs do emerge, the disease may be at an advanced stage.

Screening Recommendations

Screening is recommended beginning at the age of 45 for individuals at average risk. Screening may be recommended earlier, and possibly more often, for those at high risk.

Those at higher risk have a history of adenomatous polyps or colorectal cancer, a family history of colorectal cancer, hereditary colorectal cancer symptoms, history of abdominal or pelvic radiation for a previous cancer, or personal history of inflammatory bowel disease.

Warning Signs

Talk to your physician if you are experiencing any of the below:

- A change in bowel habits, such as diarrhea, constipation or narrowing of the stool
- A feeling that your bowel doesn't empty completely
- Rectal bleeding or blood in the stool
- Abdominal bloating, cramps or discomfort
- Weakness and fatigue
- Nausea or vomiting
- Unexplained weight loss or loss of appetite

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For more information, visit www.rhshc.com or call 563-547-2101

Regional Health Services of Howard County

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