



*Kathleen Sebelius, Governor  
Roderick L. Bremby, Secretary*

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
AND ENVIRONMENT

[www.kdheks.gov](http://www.kdheks.gov)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
March 5, 2009

Contact: Maggie Thompson, 785-296-5795  
[mthompson@kdheks.gov](mailto:mthompson@kdheks.gov)  
[www.kdheks.gov](http://www.kdheks.gov)

## **March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month**

Colon cancer is unique in the medical world. It is one cancer that can actually be prevented if detected early, before cancerous polyps have a chance to grow and spread. Colon cancer can strike at any age, but 9 out of 10 new cases are in people age 50 or older.

“Colorectal cancer is the second leading cancer of Kansans and represents 12 percent of all newly diagnosed cancers in our state,” said KDHE Secretary Roderick L. Bremby. “Early detection is the key, and I encourage all Kansans who are older than 50 or who have a family history of the disease be screened. When found early, the treatment of colorectal cancer can be very effective.”

In Kansas, nearly 1,400 new cases of colorectal cancer were diagnosed in 2005 and more than 500 individuals died from the disease in 2007 (the most recent years statistics are available). While the rates of diagnosis in men and women are similar, men are at a significantly higher risk of dying of the disease than women. Kansas death data from 2003 to 2007 also show that compared to whites, African-Americans are disproportionately affected by the disease.

Nationally, more than 145,000 new cases of colon cancer are diagnosed and over 55,000 die of the disease each year. Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death for men and women combined, second only to lung cancer. While screening rates are increasing nationwide, studies show screening rates are lower among racial and ethnic minorities compared to whites, and among those without health insurance, with low income, and with less than a high school education. Screening rates in Kansas also remain significantly lower than national rates.

There is good news – the American Cancer Society reports a nationwide drop in colon cancer deaths due to the increase in screening and early detection. The National Colorectal Cancer Research Alliance, co-founded by national news anchorwoman Katie Couric, has promoted colonoscopy tests since 2000 and part of the rise in awareness can be attributed to those efforts. The ads, “Are you the picture of health?”, featuring Couric are being used extensively during March 2009 to raise awareness of colon cancer.

The Kansas Cancer Partnership (KCP), in conjunction with KDHE, is using the Couric print ads, as well as TV and radio spots featuring other celebrities such as Morgan Freeman, Diane Keaton and Jimmy Smits in an extensive media campaign throughout the month of March. The KCP is also partnering with 22 cancer centers across the state that are conducting local community information and screening activities.

The cancer centers participating in this year's colorectal cancer activities include:

- The University of Kansas Cancer Center, Kansas City;
- Kansas City Cancer Center, Overland Park;
- University of Kansas Hospital, Westwood;
- Susan B. Allen Memorial Hospital, El Dorado;
- Mercy Regional Health Center, Manhattan;
- Mount Carmel Regional Medical Center, Pittsburg;
- Hays Medical Center, Hays;
- Hutchinson Medical Center, Hutchinson;
- PrairieStar Health Center, Hutchinson;
- Central Cancer Center, Emporia;
- Coffeyville Regional Medical Center, Coffeyville;
- Via Christi Regional Medical Center, Wichita;
- Tammy Walker Cancer Center, Salina;
- South Wind Oncology Associates, Garden City;
- St. Catherine Hospital, Garden City;
- Lawrence Memorial Hospital, Lawrence;
- Heartland Cancer Center, Great Bend;
- Konza Prairie Community Health Center, Junction City;
- St. Francis Comprehensive Cancer Center, Topeka;
- Cotton O'Neil-Stormont Vail Regional Cancer Center, Topeka;
- Radiology and Nuclear Medicine Kansas, Topeka; and
- Kansas Association for the Medically Underserved, Topeka.

To learn more about cancer programs, disease information and resources, visit [www.cancerkansas.org](http://www.cancerkansas.org). This site is dedicated to bringing Kansans knowledgeable, quality cancer information to simplify the search for information, treatments and resources.

###

*As the state's environmental protection and public health agency, KDHE promotes responsible choices to protect the health and environment for all Kansans.*

*Through education, direct services and the assessment of data and trends, coupled with policy development and enforcement, KDHE will improve health and quality of life. We prevent illness, injuries and foster a safe and sustainable environment for the people of Kansas.*