

March is Colon Cancer Awareness Month



Preventable, Treatable, Beatable is the theme for the March 2011 Kansas Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month Campaign. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), Kansas Cancer Partnership (KCP), American Cancer Society (Society) and the Kansas Association of Gastroenterologists (KAGI) are working together to promote awareness and screening activities across Kansas.

According to the Society, the lifetime risk for developing colorectal cancer is about one in 19 for men and one in 20 for women. Each year in Kansas, approximately 1,440 cases of colorectal cancer are diagnosed and over 500 people die of the disease. Colon cancer is the second leading cancer killer of Kansans, but it does not have to be.

Colorectal cancer is unique in the medical world -- it can actually be prevented if detected early, before cancerous polyps have a chance to grow and spread. When found early, the treatment of colorectal cancer can be very effective.

While colon cancer can strike at any age, nine out of 10 new cases are in people age 50 or older. Colon cancer screening is recommended for Kansans that:

- are 50 or older
- are African American and 45 or older
- have a family history of polyps or colon or rectal cancer, or
- have a history of cancer or polyps found earlier.

Several screening methods are available for colorectal cancer and screening is covered by Medicare and most health insurance plans. Two of the most common screening methods are Fecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT) and colonoscopy.

Age and family history are not risk factors that can be changed, but several lifestyle-related factors have been linked to colorectal cancer. The links between diet, weight, and exercise and colorectal cancer risk are some of the strongest for any type of cancer. Factors shown to increase a person's risk of colorectal cancer include a diet that is high in red meats and processed meats, physical inactivity, obesity, smoking, heavy alcohol use and type 2 diabetes.

Screening rates are increasing nationwide; however, 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. Kansas death data show that compared to whites, African-Americans are disproportionately affected by the disease.

In Kansans age 50 years and older, only about 23 percent have had an FOBT in the previous two years and only about 38 percent have ever had a colonoscopy. Kansans are encouraged to talk with their health care provider about what screening is appropriate for them.

Call the Society's toll free number, 1-800-ACS-2345, to talk with a trained specialist about colon cancer and where low or no-cost FOBT kits may be obtained in Kansas. To find a KAGI

screening facility in Kansas, visit <http://StopColonCancerNow.com/kansas>. For information about the March campaign or other Kansas cancer information, visit www.cancerkansas.org.



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