

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Preventing Colorectal Cancer

Early detection and other preventive measures save lives

PLYMOUTH, N.H. ---Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths after lung cancer. The good news is that colorectal cancer is preventable — and getting screened for the disease is among the most important preventive measures that you can take.

March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. Take time this month to schedule a screening if you are a man or woman over the age of 50. If you have a family history of the disease, you will need to be screened earlier and more frequently.

“I cannot stress enough the importance of screening,” says Dr. Joseph Casey of Plymouth General Surgery at Speare Memorial Hospital. “Delaying your screening can make the need for surgery more likely. Also, delaying can reduce the chances for a cure. There can be a better than 90 percent chance for a cure if the cancer is found early.”

There are a number of screening methods for colorectal cancer, from the simple fecal occult blood test to the more involved colonoscopy. After age 50 a person at average risk (no family or personal history of the disease and no symptoms) should have a yearly fecal occult blood test. This test checks three successive stool samples for "occult" or hidden blood (blood that's not detected with the naked eye). These simple tests have been shown to reduce cancer deaths by catching the cancer at an earlier and more easily treated stage.

Another screening tool is the sigmoidoscopy. The sigmoidoscope is a flexible lighted tube that is used to examine the rectum and the lower part of the colon. Experts recommend that you have this procedure once every five years after age 50.

A colonoscopy is similar to the sigmoidoscopy, except that a colonoscopy allows the doctor to see the entire colon. Abnormal growths (or polyps) can also be removed during this procedure. The polyps are then tested to see whether or not they are cancerous. Experts consider this test to be the “Gold-Standard” for colon cancer screening and recommend a colonoscopy once every 5-10 years after age 50.

There are a number of risk factors associated with colorectal cancer:

Risk factors that are beyond your control:

- Age (more than 90 percent of cases occur in people who are 50 years of age or older)

- Having experienced inflammatory bowel disease (like ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease)
- Personal or family history of colorectal cancer or colorectal polyps

Risk factors that you can control through lifestyle choices:

- Too much animal fat in your diet, especially from red meat
- Not enough fiber in your diet
- Lack of regular physical activity

By changing the above risk factors and getting recommended screenings, you can help prevent this leading cause of cancer.

Call Plymouth General Surgery at (603)536-5670. Drs. Joseph Casey and James Koren are accepting new patients and would welcome the opportunity to discuss your screening options for the detection and prevention of colon cancer. For more information about colorectal cancer please visit our link to an Overview of Colon and Rectal Cancer at www.spearehospital.com.

Speare Memorial Hospital is a 24-hour, acute care, non-profit community hospital and health care provider serving Plymouth and the communities of central New Hampshire for more than a century.

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