
Press Release

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MARCH IS COLORECTAL CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Health Dept. Urges Screening For Residents Over 50 & Those With Risk Factors

In recognition of National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, the Burlington County Health Department and Cancer Coalition, is urging men and women over the age of 50 to get screened for colorectal cancer.

Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer diagnosed in men and women in the United States, excluding skin cancers. In 2009, it is estimated that there were 106,100 new cases of colon cancer; 40,870 new cases of rectal cancer; and 49,920 deaths from colorectal cancer. Colorectal Cancer is the third leading cause of cancer in Burlington County for both men and women.

"The most common symptom of early colorectal cancer is no symptom -- that is why routine screening is so important," said Robert Gogats, Health Officer for Burlington County. "In the absence of symptoms or risk factors, screening should start no later than age 50 and continue routinely. Once is not enough. Men and women must make routine colorectal cancer screening a part of their regular healthcare. Talk with your doctor about setting up that routine."

Colorectal cancer is the term used for cancers that start in the colon or the rectum. Colorectal cancer often starts as a small growth called a polyp, long before symptoms appear. A polyp is a non-cancerous growth of tissue or tumor that grows before cancer develops.

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"Colorectal cancer screening tests can either find cancer early or prevent cancer by finding polyps before they turn into cancer," said Holly Cucuzzella, Health Educator for Burlington County

The cancer affects both men and women, but the risk increases with age. According to the American Cancer Society, more than 90 percent of colon cancer cases occur in people aged 50 and older.

Some people are at greater risk for the disease than others, such as those with a personal or family history of colorectal cancer, history of intestinal polyps or inflammatory bowel disease, and people with a history of certain inherited diseases, such as familial adenomatous polyposis and hereditary nonpolyposis colon cancer.

Colorectal cancer can be prevented or detected early through regular screening. Residents can lower their risk of developing colorectal cancer by:

- **Getting screened.** Begin regular screening at age 50. If you have a personal or family history of colorectal cancer or colorectal polyps, or a personal history of another cancer or inflammatory bowel disease, talk to your health care provider about getting screened before age 50.
- **Eating healthy.** Enjoy a low-fat diet that is rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains from breads, cereals, nuts, and beans
- **Kicking the habit.** If you use tobacco, quit. If you don't use tobacco, don't start.
- **Skipping alcohol.** If you use alcohol, drink only in moderation. Alcohol and tobacco in combination are linked to colorectal cancer and other gastrointestinal cancers.
- **Getting moving.** Exercise for at least 20 minutes three to four days each week. Moderate exercise such as walking, gardening, or climbing may help reduce your risk for colorectal cancer.

Additional information about colorectal cancer is available at the American Cancer Society Web site at http://www.cancer.org/docroot/CRI/CRI_2_1x.asp?dt=10.

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