

## March – Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

### STATISTICS

- Colorectal cancer is the 2nd leading cause of cancer-related death in Michigan, with only lung cancer taking the lives of more men and women.
- During 2004, 2,584 men and 2,501 women in Michigan were diagnosed with colorectal cancer.
- In 2005, 936 men and 993 women in Michigan died from colorectal cancer.
- Both men and women develop colorectal cancer and die from it.
- Michigan ranks 35<sup>th</sup> in the nation in colorectal cancer deaths.

### SCREENING RECOMMENDATIONS

The Michigan Cancer Consortium recommends that men and women 50 years of age and older who are not at increased risk for colorectal cancer follow a screening schedule consisting of:

- A fecal occult blood test (testing for blood in stool) every year  
**OR**
- Flexible sigmoidoscopy (a procedure to examine the lower portion of the colon) every 5 years  
**OR**
- A fecal occult blood test every year AND flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years  
**OR**
- A colonoscopy (a procedure to examine the entire colon) every 10 years  
**OR**
- A double-contrast barium enema (an X-ray of the colon) every 5 years

### RISK FACTORS

There are several factors that increase one's risk of developing colorectal cancer – also called colon or bowel cancer. These include:

- Increasing age
- A personal history of colon cancer, pre-cancerous colon polyps, or inflammatory bowel disease
- A family history of colon cancer or pre-cancerous colon polyps
- Being a Jew of Eastern European descent
- A diet high in animal fats or low in fiber
- Not being physically active
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Smoking
- Heavy use of alcohol

### RESOURCES

American Cancer Society

[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[www.cdc.gov/cancer/screenforlife](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/screenforlife)

Colon Cancer Alliance

[www.ccalliance.org](http://www.ccalliance.org)

Michigan Cancer Consortium

[www.michigancancer.org](http://www.michigancancer.org)

National Cancer Institute – Colon and Rectal Cancer

[www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/colon-and-rectal](http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/colon-and-rectal)

National Colorectal Cancer Research Alliance

[www.eifoundation.org/national/nccra/splash](http://www.eifoundation.org/national/nccra/splash)

National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable

[www.nccrt.org](http://www.nccrt.org)

Prevent Cancer Foundation

[www.preventcancer.org](http://www.preventcancer.org)

## SCREENING SAVES LIVES

If you're 50 or older, getting a screening test for colorectal cancer could save your life. Here's how:

- Colorectal cancer usually starts from polyps in the colon or rectum. A polyp is a growth that shouldn't be there.
- Over time, some polyps can turn into cancer.
- Screening tests can find polyps, so they can be removed before they turn into cancer.
- Screening tests can also find colorectal cancer early, when the chance of being cured is good.
- At the disease's earliest stages, there are virtually no symptoms. As it progresses, changes to bowel movement patterns, bleeding, and abdominal discomfort may occur.

## PREVENTION STRATEGIES

How can you stop colorectal cancer before it begins?

### Step 1: Get Screened

- Have a fecal occult blood test every year.  
**OR**
- Have a flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years.  
**OR**
- Have a fecal occult blood test every year AND flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years.  
**OR**
- Have a colonoscopy every 10 years.  
**OR**
- Have a double-contrast barium enema every 5 years.

### Step 2: Live healthy. Eat right and be active.

- Eat high fiber, low fat diets. Whole grains are a plus. Avoid the french fries.
- Kick the butt! Smokers are at higher risk of colorectal cancer.
- Walk your 10,000 steps a day. Being active is being healthy.

Family and personal history should be considered when determining screening options. If you are at an increased risk for colorectal cancer, screening should begin at an earlier age and be done more often.