

HEALTH

Screening is Key to Preventing Colorectal Cancer

NewsUSA

(NU) - Colorectal cancer is the number two cancer killer in the U.S. Unfortunately, few people realize that there are a number of simple screening tests that can make colorectal cancer one of the most preventable cancers.

Most colon cancers begin as polyps which, if not removed, can become cancerous. The development of more than 75-90 percent of colorectal cancer can be avoided through early detection and removal of these pre-cancerous polyps. The digestive health specialists from the American College of Gastroenterology (ACG) urge you to get screened for colorectal cancer.

Colorectal cancer is most common after age 50, but it can strike at younger ages. The chance of colon cancer increases with age. It's suggested that screenings begin at age 50 for men and women at average risk for colorectal cancer. African-Americans should begin colorectal cancer screening as early as 45. African-Americans are diagnosed with colorectal cancer at a younger age than whites, and African-Americans with colorectal cancer have a decreased survival rate compared with whites.

Colonoscopy is considered the best test for colorectal cancer screening and prevention because it allows physicians to look directly at the entire colon and identify suspicious growths. It is the only test that can detect and remove pre-cancerous polyps from the colon during the same examination.

For average risk individuals, the ACG recommends colonoscopy screening every 10 years



The ACG recommends that you talk to your doctor about colorectal cancer screening.

beginning at age 50 as the preferred strategy. An alternative strategy for average risk individuals is an annual stool test to detect blood and a flexible sigmoidoscopic exam every five years, although unlike colonoscopy this approach does not allow visualization and removal of polyps in the entire colon. The ACG urges you to talk to your doctor about what screening tests are right for you.

There is no reason for someone to die from a preventable cancer. With improved use of colon cancer screening, we can save lives. Colorectal cancer screening with colonoscopy is among the most powerful preventive tools in clinical medicine. To learn more about the benefits of colorectal cancer screening, speak with your doctor or visit www.acg.gi.org.