

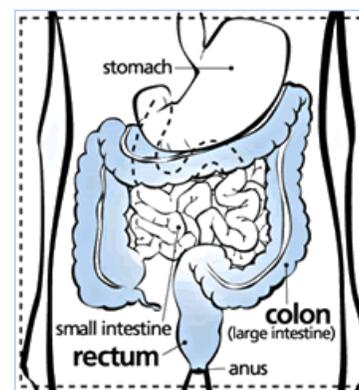


Spring is When Things Happen!

March is a busy month for health observances; one being “**Colorectal Cancer Awareness month**”! This may be a topic that some find too delicate to talk about, but it is a health concern we all must consider at some point. Did you know that colorectal cancer is the **second leading cancer killer in the U.S.**?

The body is made of various types of cells that grow and divide and make more cells of that type when the body needs more to stay healthy and to function as needed. Sometimes in this process, something may go wrong and abnormal cells are formed and continue to grow in an “uncontrolled way”. This growth of tissue forms a tumor, which can be cancerous or benign. If a cancerous tumor forms in the colon or in the rectum (both part of the large intestine or bowel), it is called **colorectal cancer**. The risk of developing colorectal cancer rises after the age of 50 and is common in both men and women. For this reason, the health care community recommends colon cancer screenings for anyone with an average risk to be screened at age 50 and beyond, as needed.

New research studies indicate that more Americans are being screened for colorectal cancer early enough to intervene in cancer progression.



As a result of routine screenings, there is some indication that colon cancer may be on the decline for older Americans; however, a new study finds the incidence of colon cancer in younger adults between 20 and 39 may be increasing. Because of the questions that arise from this new study, more research is needed to identify those who are most at risk for developing colorectal cancer and find ways to prevent the disease in people of all ages. As with most cancers, the earlier cancer is found, the better chance of treating the disease and having a better outcome.



Risk factors for colorectal cancer (anything that increases your chance of getting a disease) –

- **Age** – as one grows older, you are more “likely” to develop colorectal cancer
- **Family history of colorectal cancer**- with parents/siblings/or children who have had the disease or inherited genetic mutation factors that can increase risk
- **Personal history** – having already had colorectal cancer or for females – having had cancer of the ovary, uterus, or breast
- **Alcohol** - drinking 3 or more alcoholic beverages daily
- **Cigarette smoking**
- **Obesity**
- **Polyps** - grape-like growths on the inside wall of the colon and rectum. Not all polyps become cancerous, but almost all colon cancers begin as polyps.
- **Inflammatory bowel disease** - including Crohn’s disease or ulcerative colitis – conditions in the lining of the colon that can increase risk for developing colorectal cancer.
- **Lifestyle factors** –like lack of routine physical activity, low fiber and high fat diet and low fruit and vegetable diet.



For all Yates County employees and area residents

Symptoms for colorectal cancer – check with your doctor if you have symptoms like these

- Change in habits for bowel movements
- Feeling of bowel not completely emptying or having diarrhea or constipation
- Red or dark blood in stool
- More narrow stools than usual
- Abdominal discomfort like frequent gas pains, bloating, fullness, or cramping
- Unknown cause for weight loss
- Feeling of constant tiredness
- Vomiting for unknown reasons



Screening for early detection of colorectal cancer -

- Fecal occult blood test (FOBT) – used at home to detect hidden blood in stool. Fairly simple to use and sent in for test results.
- Sigmoidoscopy – Home colon cleansing preparation required prior to health center screening method that uses lighted instrument examining the rectum and lower part of the colon looking for polyps and tumors.
- Colonoscopy – Home colon cleansing preparation required prior to health center screening the rectum and large intestine using a lighted instrument looking for polyps and tumors. The instrument used also permits removal of polyps for further microscopic testing. The interval between recommended colonoscopies varies depending on what the results of the procedure are. It varies from a few years to 10 years, with routine checks usually not necessary after the age of 75.

Sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy screenings are not part of the best day of your life, but are far from the worst, and may just be the life-saving event you need. For more information go to:

<http://nihseniorhealth.gov/colorectalcancer/colorectalcancerdefined/01.html>

In March we also observe “**National Sleep Awareness Week**”, to remind us all of the importance of a good night’s (day’s for some) sleep. Sleep is necessary for good brain function! Although your brain remains active during the various stages of sleep, **sleep is important for normal daily body functions and good physical and mental health.** Some stages of sleep are required for us to feel well and function (both your performance and mood) the next day while other stages of sleep help us to learn and make memories.

Research has shown that you can have too little sleep or too much sleep. Infants need about 16 -18 hours of sleep while school-aged kids need about 9-10 hours. On average, adult recommendations are between 7-8 hours of sleep. For those who are getting too little sleep, you are creating “sleep debt” for yourself. As people age, they tend to sleep lighter and have shorter time spans of sleep, while still needing about the same amount of sleep . Some people experience sleep disorders like insomnia, sleep apnea, restless legs syndrome, and narcolepsy, all of which can affect a night’s sleep and one’s health. To learn more, go to:

www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/brain_basics/understanding_sleep.htm

Studies suggest:

- Changes in sleep patterns for teens can affect how much they tend to eat, consuming more calories on less or more than normal sleep.
- Getting too little sleep may raise your risk for diabetes because this can lead to increased levels of free fatty acids in the blood, interfering with how insulin regulates blood sugar levels.
- For older adults who may be at higher risk for chronic diseases, getting too much sleep may increase their risk for stroke.

The best health practice is to routinely get a good rest. Don’t skimp, especially if you have to function at a high level or drive!

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