

NEWS RELEASE
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March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month
Topic: Early colorectal cancer signs and recommended screening

March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month! The Cancer Resource Centers of Mendocino County will be promoting awareness of colorectal cancer in a series of four articles throughout the month of March. Colorectal cancer is highly preventable and treatable: in this series of articles we will emphasize actions you can take to both prevent and detect colorectal cancer. Today's article will focus on early colorectal signs, recommended screening and available resources.

Colorectal cancer is cancer of the colon or rectum and is often referred to simply as colon cancer. Colorectal cancer is equally common in men and women. It is important to understand that symptoms of colorectal cancer do not often present themselves early on. When they do arise, however, the most common symptoms involve changes in bowel habits. Although some symptoms may be characteristic of problems other than colorectal cancer, you should contact your health care provider if you experience any of the following:

- Change in bowel habits from what is considered normal for a given individual (diarrhea or constipation)
- Feeling that your bowel does not empty completely
- Unexplained anemia (low blood count)
- Blood in stool
- Finding stools are narrower than usual
- Gas pains, cramps, bloating
- Unexplained weight loss
- Nausea or vomiting

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommends the following screening guidelines as a means for health care providers to detect polyps and cancer before any symptoms arise:

- Ages 50 – 75: Screening for colorectal cancer using fecal occult blood testing, sigmoidoscopy, or colonoscopy. The risks and benefits of these screening methods vary.
- Ages 76 – 85: Recommends against routine screening for colorectal cancer in adults of this age. There may be considerations that support colorectal cancer screening in an individual.

- Ages 85 and older: Recommends against screening for colorectal cancer in adults 85 and older.
- The USPSTF concludes that the evidence is insufficient to assess the benefits and harms of computed tomographic colonography and fecal DNA testing as screening modalities for colorectal cancer.

If you would like to be screened for colorectal cancer, please contact your physician or the Mendocino Coast Clinics at (707)-964-1251. For more information regarding colorectal cancer or any other cancer, please contact the Cancer Resource Centers of Mendocino County at 937-3833 or 800-449-6483 (Coastal office) or 467-3828 (Inland office) or visit our website at crcmendocino.org.

Recommended Internet Sites:

- Colon Cancer Alliance www.ccalliance.org
- Prevent Cancer Foundation www.preventcancer.org
- American Cancer Society www.cancer.org
- U.S. Preventive Services Task Force www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org

If you do not have access to a computer or internet services, check with your local libraries or family resources centers.

The second article in this series will cover risk factors of colorectal cancer.