

NEWS RELEASE
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Contact:
Andrea Bessey
Cancer Resource Centers of Mendocino County
(707) 937-3833

Colorectal Cancer Prevention
Topic: Lowering Risk Factors

Through a series of news articles during the months of March and April the Cancer Resource Centers of Mendocino County (CRCMC) has been imparting information to the general public about colorectal cancer prevention. In the first articles we focused on early symptoms, risk factors and screening guidelines; the final two pieces will concentrate on prevention strategies with an emphasis on nutrition.

A nutritious, high fiber diet is recommended beginning in childhood. It is not too late at any age, however, to make dietary changes as a way of reducing risk factors associated with colorectal cancer. The nutritional guidelines outlined in this article along with screening guidelines (listed below) are two of the recommended prevention strategies in lowering your risk factors.

SCREENING: Since screening for polyps is critical in enabling early detection these guidelines recommended by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) bear repeating. It is through screening that polyps (growths) which may be either precancerous or cancerous can be detected and removed from the colon or rectum.

- 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.

Using the following guidelines as your preventative strategy will not only help reduce your risk of colorectal cancer, but will benefit your overall general health.

1. Eat a Healthy Diet Emphasizing Plant Foods:

- 5-9 servings fruits and vegetables daily. (2 1/2 - 5 cups daily)
- Limit meat (3 oz or less daily). Avoid processed, cured meats.
- 3 servings whole grains (1 1/2 cups cooked daily)
- 25-40 grams fiber daily

2. Achieve and Maintain a Healthy Weight if Currently Overweight or Obese.

3. Engage in at Least 30 Minutes of Moderate-to-Vigorous Physical Activity at Least 5 Days/Week.

4. Get Regular Colon Cancer Screenings.

Studies show a reduced colon cancer risk from eating whole fruits, vegetables, grains, legumes, and nuts. Health promoting components in these whole foods and good food sources include:

- Phytonutrients - organic parts of plants which can help protect the cells of the colon from damage.
- Fiber - indigestible part of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds. Fiber helps move waste through the colon, and some types may help detoxify potential cancer-causing substances.
- Cruciferous vegetables - contain anti-cancer properties thought to reduce colon cancer risk. Highest content is in broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, kale, Brussels sprouts, and radishes.
- Colon protective foods - citrus fruits, berries, cantaloupe, papaya, pineapple, tomato, raw pepper, carrots, winter squash, yams, spinach, chard, whole grains, almonds, walnuts, peanuts, sunflower seeds, turmeric, ginger, curry.

Studies using supplements have not shown the same preventative benefits as eating whole foods for reducing colon cancer risk. There are probably other unknown benefits in whole foods still to be discovered.

The nutritional information in this article has been provided by Nutritionist, Lois Senger, who has advised individuals on nutrition and health at Mendocino Coast District Hospital for 30 years.

The final news article in this series will continue to emphasize nutrition by listing wholesome recipes that are cost effective as well as tasty.

To discuss screening recommendations and options for colorectal cancer, please contact your health care provider. If you are seeking a health care provider, contact the Mendocino Coast Clinics at (707)-964-1251 or North Coast Family Health Center at (707)-961-4631. 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.