

Resolve to Take Colon Cancer Test, Experts Say

Screening can catch precancerous growths at early, treatable stage.

FRIDAY, Jan. 6 (HealthDay News) -- If you're 50 or older, consider making it a new year goal to get screened for colorectal cancer, the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy suggests. Colorectal cancer is one of the most preventable cancers because most cases arise from precancerous growths in the colon called polyps. These can be found during a screening exam and removed before they turn into cancer.

Recent research has confirmed that screening is one reason why colorectal cancer death rates are declining, according to an ASGE news release.

Compared to 2002, about 66,000 cases of colorectal cancer were prevented and 32,000 lives were saved in the United States between 2003 and 2007, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Half of the prevented cases and deaths were the result of screening.

However, one in three U.S. adults isn't screened for colorectal cancer, which is the third most commonly diagnosed cancer and the third leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States.

In many cases, colorectal cancer causes no symptoms until it is too late to treat. Age is the most important risk factor for the disease, so even older people with healthy lifestyles need to get screened.

If you're 50 or older, talk to your doctor about colorectal cancer screening and the method that is best for you, the ASGE advises. Screening methods include colonoscopy, sigmoidoscopy, stool blood tests, stool DNA, CT colonography (virtual colonoscopy) and barium enema.

Screening should begin at an earlier age for people with risk factors such as a family history of polyps or colorectal cancer. Some experts recommend that black Americans begin screening at age 45.

Colonoscopy is considered the preferred method because it is the only test that both detects and removes precancerous polyps during the same exam. A person at average risk with normal colonoscopy results shouldn't require another exam for 10 years. Screenings may be more frequent for patients found to have polyps or cancer.

More information

The U.S. National Cancer Institute has more about [colorectal cancer screening](#).

(SOURCE: American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy, news release, December 2011)

Copyright © 2012 [HealthDay](#).  All rights reserved.

HealthDayNews articles are derived from various sources and do not reflect federal policy. healthfinder.gov does not endorse opinions, products, or services that may appear in news stories. For more information on health topics in the news, visit [Health News](#) on healthfinder.gov.