

High Point Speaks Out About Colon Cancer

Community Update



Community leaders in High Point, researchers, and other county, state, and national organizations are working together to raise awareness about colon cancer. We are committed to reducing the number of people who suffer or lose their lives to colon cancer in North Carolina. We are also interested in

increasing access to colon cancer screening. And we are starting the effort here in High Point.

Colon Cancer Facts

- Colon cancer is preventable
- Colon cancer is one of the most curable types of cancer if it is found early
- Colon cancer is one of the most common cancers in the United States
- Colon cancer is the second leading cause of cancer-related death

Answering Your Questions About Colon Cancer

What is colon cancer?

Colon cancer, also called colorectal cancer, can develop anywhere along the wall of the large intestine. The large intestine includes the colon and rectum. Colon cancer usually begins as a tiny polyp. If the polyp is not removed it can grow larger. Not all polyps turn into cancer. But most colon cancers begin as polyps. Most colon cancers grow slowly, over a period of five to fifteen years.

Am I at risk for colon cancer?

Both men and women can get colon cancer. As you get older, your chance of getting colon cancer increases. In fact, about 90% of colon cancers occur in people older than 50. African Americans are at a greater risk of getting colon cancer and dying from it than any other race. Lower screening rates may cause the racial difference in diagnosis and death rates for colon cancer.

How can I stay healthy?

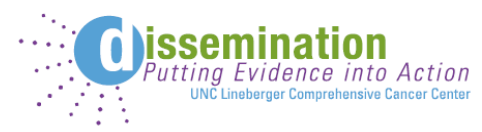
- **ASK YOUR DOCTOR about colon cancer screening!** All men and women ages 50 and older should get screened regularly.
- **Exercise and try to achieve a healthy weight.**
- **Eat lots of fruits, vegetables and whole grains.**
- **Avoid foods high in animal fat.**
- **Don't use tobacco.**
- **Limit alcohol use.** For men, no more than 2 drinks a day. For women, no more than 1 a day.



Why is screening important?

Colon cancer almost always starts as a polyp in the colon or rectum. Screening tests can find these polyps and remove them. Screening can also find cancer before there are any symptoms. Treatment works best when the cancer is found early. See the *Screening Guidelines* box on the next page.

Some people need to get screened more often because they are at *higher risk* for colon cancer. You are at higher risk if you have had colon cancer or colon polyps in the past, an inflammatory bowel disease like ulcerative colitis, or if your parent, brother, sister or child has had colon cancer or colon polyps.



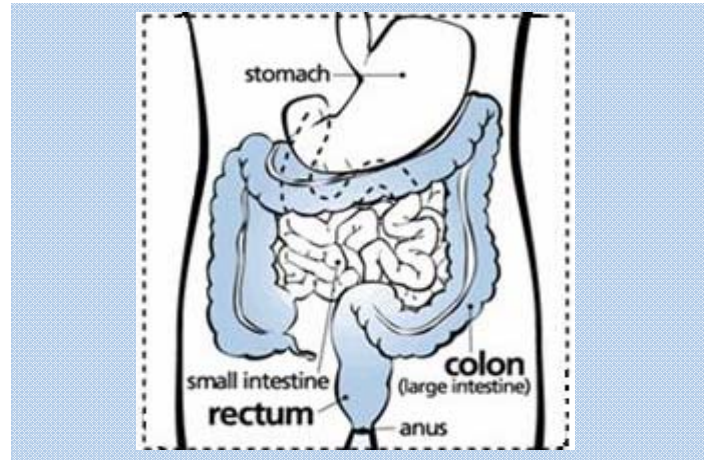
Screening Guidelines

There are five effective ways to screen for colon cancer. Talk with a doctor about which option is best for you.

- FOBT every year — we call this the stool test*
- flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years
- stool test* every year plus flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years
- double-contrast barium enema every 5 years
- colonoscopy every 10 years

*For the stool test, the take-home multiple sample method should be used.

All positive tests should be followed up with colonoscopy.



Terms Related to Colon Cancer

- The **colon** is part of the large intestine. It is a long, tube-like organ that removes water from digested food. The leftover, solid waste (stool) exits the body through the anus.
- **Colorectal cancer** is cancer of the colon and/or rectum. The colon and rectum are part of the large intestine.
- The **large intestine** is the last part of the digestive tract. It includes the colon and rectum.
- A **polyp** is an abnormal mass of tissue that grows from the lining of the large intestine.
- The **rectum** is the last part of the large intestine that stores stool until it is ready to leave the body through the anus.

What is the Stool Test (FOBT)?

FOBT stands for fecal occult blood test. We call it the stool test for short. When abnormal growths or cancers start to form in the colon or rectum, there are usually tiny amounts of blood in your stool. The stool test involves collecting samples of your stool to check for blood. The test comes as a kit that you take home to collect samples. You send your stool samples to a lab for analysis. If the stool test finds blood in your stool, you should have a colonoscopy to find out if you have polyps or colon cancer.



What is a colonoscopy?

A colonoscopy is a screening test that looks inside your large intestine using a thin flexible tube. A light and tiny camera are attached to the tube so that it can find and remove polyps.

Isn't colon cancer screening expensive?

There are five different types of colon cancer screening tests. Some are more expensive than others. Many people avoid screening because of the cost. This is a big problem because screening is the best way to prevent colon cancer. And a lot of people don't know that the stool test is less expensive than the others. Read the Newsflash on the next page to find out about local efforts to address this issue in High Point, North Carolina.

Sources of information:

The American Cancer Society: www.cancer.org
The Mayo Clinic: www.mayoclinic.com/health/colon-cancer

The National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable: www.nccrt.org
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/cancer

High Point: Study Site for Increasing Colon Cancer Screening

To increase colon cancer screening in High Point, we need to learn as much as possible about what would make it easier for people to get screened. In March of 2007, 28 African American residents of High Point participated in focus groups about colon cancer screening. We held four groups and 14 men and 14 women participated. The focus groups were part of a study being conducted by researchers from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

What We Learned

We learned some of the reasons why people do not get screened for colon cancer. Understanding barriers to screening will help in creating a screening program that meets the needs of people in communities we hope to reach. People also talked about ways to make the High Point screening program successful.

1) Barriers to Colon Cancer Screening

In the discussion groups, participants listed a lot of different obstacles that might keep someone from getting screened for colon cancer.

Participants said that some people are:

1. Not very informed about colon cancer
2. Afraid of test results
3. Afraid of pain or discomfort
4. Uncomfortable with medical doctors and prefer home remedies
5. Not likely to go to the doctor unless they have symptoms
6. Dealing with financial constraints
7. Lacking insurance
8. Lacking transportation

Participants also listed barriers to using the stool test.

Some people are:

1. Not comfortable with collecting their stool samples
2. Put off by long, complicated directions for completing the stool test

2) Suggestions for Colon Cancer Screening Program in High Point

Participants provided many great ideas about how to make a colon cancer screening program work for residents of High Point.

Participant Recommendations:

1. Provide more education and increase awareness about colon cancer and screening.
 - Doctors should talk to their patients about colon cancer and screening.
 - Patients should get materials to help them understand the importance of screening (for example pamphlets and videos).
 - People want education about colon cancer earlier in life (rather than waiting until screening age).
 - More media attention should be given to colon cancer.
2. Explain how to perform the stool test for colon cancer. The test involves several steps, and participants said it would help to have step-by-step instruction.
3. Include materials to make collecting and storing samples more sanitary (for example, a container that closes for storing the samples, latex gloves).
4. Increase size of font and diagrams on the stool test instructions.
5. Test results should come directly from a health care provider.

"I think a lack of understanding of how important colon cancer is or what colon cancer is [is a barrier to screening]. We hear a lot about mammograms...and pap smears. But we don't really hear a lot about colon cancer."

~ High Point resident

(read more on the next page)

NEWSFLASH (continued):

6. Include information about preventing colon cancer and screening schedules with the results.
7. Barriers such as financial constraints, lack of insurance, and lack of transportation must be removed. If they are not removed, the screening program will not help those who need it most.

“The cost factor. If I do have [colon cancer], I can’t afford to continue with the treatment... Therefore, if I don’t start and I don’t know, I won’t have to follow through.”

~ High Point resident

***You can stop colon cancer before it starts!
Talk to your doctor about screening.***

Program Leaders and Sponsors

This Community Update is from the **Comprehensive Cancer Control Collaborative of North Carolina** at the Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention at the University of North Carolina. The 4CNC is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Cancer Institute.



At the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

- **Dissemination Core at UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center**
- **Carolina Community Network to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities (CCN)**

In High Point

- **High Point Regional Health System Inc.**
- **Housing Authority of the City of High Point**
- **Open Door Ministries Clinic**
- **Macedonia Family Resource Center**
- **New Bethel Baptist Church**
- **Williams Memorial CME Church**

In Guilford County

- **Guilford County Health Department**
- **Piedmont Health Services and Sickle Cell Agency**
- **Colon Cancer Alliance, Greensboro Chapter**
- **Greensboro AHEC Community Research Advisory Board**

Across North Carolina

- **Comprehensive Cancer Control Collaborative of North Carolina**

To find out more about this study or how to get involved with our effort to reduce colon cancer in High Point, NC, contact:

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4CNC@unc.edu

Brandolyn White 336-832-8045

Other good resources for colon cancer information:

American Cancer Society:

1-800-227-2345

Cancer Information Services:

1-800-422-6237

Colon Cancer Alliance:

1-877-422-2030

<http://www.CCAlliance.org>

Resource for quitting smoking:

Quit Now NC!

1-800-784-8669

<http://www.quitnownc.org/>

Coming this Fall! Colon Cancer Awareness Event

It is time to break the silence about colon cancer. We are planning a local event to raise awareness about colon cancer and to talk about plans for a successful screening program in High Point. We want your input!

Look for an invitation or announcement soon. We hope you will join us!