

### **Colon Cancer Facts**

More than 1 in 20 will get cancer of the colon in their lifetime- the risk goes up with age.

Three out of four cases occur in people without risk factors.

Most cancers are presently detected at an advanced stage.

Risk factors include: More than one first degree relative (parent, sibling, child) with cancer of the colon; one first degree relative with cancer of the colon before age 60; ulcerative colitis; Crohn's Disease; certain rare hereditary conditions with a very strong risk for cancer of the colon- Familial Polyposis and Hereditary Non Polyposis Colorectal Cancer (people with these conditions have several family members with cancer of the colon, many with onset at a young age).

Prevention of cancer of the colon: Folic acid (0.4 mg/day) may lower the risk of cancer of the colon. This is contained in most multi-vitamins, green, leafy vegetables and is a supplement in many vitamin supplemented cereals.

Removal of polyps that may turn into cancer is another strategy. This is done by undergoing screening tests that will also help in detecting a cancer early.

Current recommendations for screening include:

- Screening should begin for patients of average risk at age 50, special considerations are in place for those of high risk.
- Annual tests for blood in the stool using home detection kits (instructions below). Two samples from three stool are tested. This may lower the death rate from cancer of the colon by a third.
- The screening above plus a sigmoidoscopy every five years. This is felt to be better than just the above.
- A colonoscopy every ten years (testing stool for blood in between is not felt to be needed with this choice).

### **Patient instructions for stool test**

- Do not collect samples during, or until three days after your menstrual period, or when you have bleeding hemorrhoids or blood in your urine.
- Cannot consume the following drugs, vitamins and foods:
  - Avoid 7 days prior to and during the test period:**  
Aspirin or other non steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs
  - Avoid 72 hours prior to and during the test period:**  
Vitamin C in excess of 250 mg per day (from all sources, dietary and supplemental)  
Red meat (beef, lamb), including processed meats and liver  
Raw fruits and vegetables (especially melons, radishes, turnips and horseradish)
- Remove toilet bowl cleaners from toilet tank and flush twice before proceeding
- Collect samples from three consecutive bowel movements or three bowel movements closely spaced in time
- Protect slides from heat, light and volatile chemicals (iodine or bleach).
- Keep cover flap of slides closed when not in use.
- Mail in to office, place your name on the cover flap of the slides.