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Press Release:

Colorectal Cancer Month

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Are You the One?

It is estimated that one in 18 people will develop colorectal cancer sometime during their lifetime. Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer and the third leading cause of cancer deaths in both men and women. However, men are more likely to get colorectal cancer than women. The risk of getting colorectal cancer increases with age; therefore, getting tested for colorectal cancer is recommended at age 50 unless there is a family history or if certain illnesses or symptoms occur. Speaking with your health care provider will help you know when to be tested and what type of test is best for you.

The colon and rectum are part of the body's digestive system. The colon is sometimes referred to as the large intestine, and the rectum is the last 7-8 inches of the intestines. Their job is to absorb water and eliminate waste products from digestion. Small polyps can form and grow in the colon and rectum with no symptoms; therefore, testing is needed to see if polyps are present. These polyps may be noncancerous (benign) or cancerous (malignant). A simple Fecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT) can be done at home to see if there is blood in the stool as some polyps may bleed. A colonoscopy, which is performed in a hospital, can remove polyps to be tested for cancer. The doctor examines the entire colon and rectum using a long lighted tube called a colonoscope. People may be fearful about this procedure; however, medications are given, and the procedure is generally painless.

There are certain risk factors associated with the risk of developing colorectal cancer. These include:

- Increasing age
- Family history
- History of inflammatory bowel disease, intestinal polyps, ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease, or a personal history of cancer
- Diet-diets high in animal fats increase the risk
- Being overweight or obese
- Smoking
- Inactive lifestyle
- Heavy alcohol consumption

Some cancers of the colon and rectum can be prevented by removing polyps. In addition, colorectal cancers are more treatable when found early before they spread to other areas of the body. Getting tested for colorectal cancer as recommended by your health care provider can find polyp and cancers sooner.

Most health insurances cover the cost of colorectal cancer testing. However, if you are uninsured whether employed or unemployed, or have a high deductible or co-pay, the **Cancer Services Program of Niagara County** may be able to assist you. We provide free FOBT kits for those at average risk and can cover the cost of a colonoscopy if you are at high risk. Call 278-8285 today to see if you qualify. Don't be the 1 out of 18 who will get colorectal cancer.

PUBLIC HEALTH: PREVENT. PROMOTE. PROTECT.