

# ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT COLORECTAL CANCER

## WHAT IS COLORECTAL CANCER?

- ◆ Colorectal cancer is cancer of the colon and rectum. The colon and rectum are parts of your body's digestive system. The digestive system uses the food you eat to help your body work well. What your body doesn't use is called waste. This becomes a bowel movement.
- ◆ Cancer of the colon and rectum happens to men and women.
- ◆ It is very easy to prevent. If you get this type of cancer, it can often be treated and cured.

## CAN YOU PREVENT COLORECTAL CANCER?

- ◆ You *can* help prevent colorectal cancer. Exercise and eat healthy foods like fruits and vegetables.
- ◆ There are medical tests that can prevent colorectal cancer. These tests can also help find the cancer early when it may be cured.
- ◆ The medical tests are called screening tests. They can show if you have growths in your colon or rectum called polyps. Polyps are about the size of grapes. If they are found, they can be removed. Then you will not get colorectal cancer.

## TALK TO YOUR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL ABOUT COLORECTAL CANCER

- ◆ Tell your health care professional if you have any of these problems:
  - Bleeding from your rectum when you wipe yourself after you go to the bathroom
  - Blood in or on the bowel movements
  - Bowel movements that are different than normal for you
  - Bowel movements that are skinnier than normal for you
  - Feeling bloated or full in the stomach and having stomach pain
  - Going to the bathroom more often or less often
  - Having gas pains
  - Losing weight when you are not trying to
  - Feeling tired all the time
  - Vomiting

- ◆ Talk to your family. Ask your grandparents, parents, sisters or brothers if they know if they have ever had a polyp, colorectal cancer, a bowel disease or some other type of cancer. Tell your health care professional if you or anyone in your family has had these problems. He or she may tell you to have the screening tests before age 50. If you are African American you may need to begin screening at age 45. Colorectal cancer is often diagnosed at a younger age in African Americans.
- ◆ If neither you, nor anyone in your family, have had these problems, then you should have a screening test when you turn 50 years old.

## **WHAT KINDS OF TESTS CAN HELP PREVENT OR FIND COLORECTAL CANCER?**

- ◆ There are several types of tests including:
  - FOBT — a test of your stool for blood
  - Sigmoidoscopy — a test that looks at the last part of your colon (sigmoid colon)
  - Colonoscopy — a test that uses a camera to look at the whole colon
  - Barium enema — a test that uses an X-ray machine to look at the whole colon
- ◆ Ask your health care professional which test you should have and when
- ◆ Ask what will happen during the test and who will give you the test
- ◆ Ask how you will feel after the test is done
- ◆ Ask when he will tell you what was found
- ◆ Ask what will happen if something is found

*March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, founded by the Cancer Research and Prevention Foundation in collaboration with many partner organizations. Colorectal cancer is preventable, and is easy to treat and often curable when detected early. Talk with your health care professional about colorectal cancer today.*



**To learn more, visit our Web site at [www.preventcancer.org/colorectal](http://www.preventcancer.org/colorectal)**