



HOUSING & COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

OFFICE ON AGING

1300 S. GRAND AVENUE • BUILDING B, 2ND FLOOR • SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA • 92705
PHONE: (714) 567-7500 • FAX: (714) 567-5021 • TDD: (714) 550-9472



March 2008

Colonoscopy: It's a good thing!

By: Erin Ulibarri, MPH

It's not be something that many people want to talk about, but colorectal cancer screening is the best way to both diagnose and treat colon cancer in its early stages. The CDC's latest data (2004) shows that colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer behind prostate/breast and lung cancers. In addition, a recent study found that colorectal screenings among those on Medicare has declined in recent years. Since March is **National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month**, it is a good time to make that appointment with your doctor to find out if you are due for a colorectal exam.

Colorectal cancer occurs in the large intestine or rectum and starts as a benign polyp (non-cancerous growth) that can become cancerous if not treated. There are four tests, which are 80-100% covered by Medicare, that a person can have to find out if cancer is a concern. Colonoscopy, the most familiar of the screening tests, uses a flexible tube with a camera attached to look at the rectum and the entire colon. An advantage of this test is that suspicious polyps can be removed at the same time before they become cancerous. It is recommended that people 50 years and older undergo a colonoscopy.

Who is most at risk for colorectal cancer?

- Being obese and eating a high-fat diet
- People who smoke
- Being over 69 years old
- People who are not physically active
- Those with a family history

What are the symptoms of colorectal cancer?

- Bloody stools
- Frequent stomach pains or cramps that don't have a cause
- A change in bowel habits
- Losing weight without trying

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms and have not gone to the doctor yet, make an appointment sooner rather than later. The earlier cancer is found, the better the chances are that it will be cured. However, with proper screening, colon cancer can be detected BEFORE the development of symptoms, when it is most curable.

The County of Orange Office on Aging has information on colorectal screening and a preventive screening chart that will help you keep track of the screening tests you have taken. Call Office on Aging Information and Assistance at **1-800-510-2020** or **1-714-567-7500** to request these materials or information on other resources such as caregiving, housing, transportation, and meal programs.

Sources: Science Daily-American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy
National Colorectal Cancer Action Campaign



Julia Bidwell, Interim Director, Housing & Community Services Department
Karen Roper, Executive Director, Office on Aging
Information & Assistance (800) 510-2020 or (714) 567-7500
Email: officonaging@ocgov.com ♦ www.officeonaging.ocgov.com