Colorectal Cancer Awareness

Colorectal cancer might be one of those things we don't want to think about. But if you take a few minutes to read some of the following information, you might be convinced that it's worth it to talk to your health care provider about getting screened for this disease.

Routine screening is the most effective risk reduction tool we have right now.

Here are some common myths about colorectal cancer as highlighted by the Cancer Research and Prevention Foundation:

- Myth: There is nothing I can do about getting colorectal cancer.

  Reality: Colorectal cancer can be prevented. Screening tests can detect polyps (grape-like growths on the lining of the colon or rectum) that can turn into cancer. Removing these polyps can prevent colorectal cancer from ever occurring. Starting at age 50, men and women who are at average risk should be screened regularly for colorectal cancer. New research shows that African Americans should begin screening at age 45. Men and women who are at high risk of the disease because of personal or family medical history may need to be tested earlier and should talk to their health care professional about when.

- Myth: Colorectal cancer is usually fatal.

  Reality: Colorectal cancer is usually curable when detected early. More than 90 percent of patients with localized colorectal cancer confined to the colon or rectum are alive five years after diagnosis.

- Myth: Screening tests are necessary only for individuals who have symptoms.

  Reality: Since symptoms of colorectal cancer are often silent, it is important to get screened regularly. Screenings test for a disease even if the patient has no symptoms. About 74 percent of all new cases of colorectal cancer occur in individuals with no known risk factors for the disease, other than being 50 or older. If you have a personal or family history of colorectal cancer, polyps or inflammatory bowel disease you may need to be screened before age 50. Talk with your health care provider.

For more information, log on to: www.preventcancer.org/colorectal