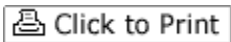




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Health Matters: Colon Cancer

Triston Sanders - Medical Anchor

The American Cancer Society estimates that the year 2004 will close with having seen over 106,000 new cases of colon cancer in the United States. It is the second most frequently diagnosed malignancy in the U.S.

In this Health Matters, we take a look at colon cancer and the early preventative steps that are available.

Cancer of the colon is a highly treatable and often curable disease when localized to the bowel. The problem, says oncologist Eric Rost, is that early colon cancer has very few symptoms.

“Often times the symptoms of colon cancer occur later than we’d like to find them.”

Symptoms of colon cancer include blood in the stool, weight loss, and change in your bowel habits. Since early detection is the key to treating this disease, you need to know when you should have a colonoscopy.

Dr. Michael Putland says, “That’s a screening test, checking to make sure that people don’t have polyps or pre-cancerous tissue in the colon.”

If you are not in a high risk group for colon cancer, you should have a colonoscopy starting at age 50, but guidelines for this screening test are different if you have risk factors for this disease.

“If individuals have a first-degree relative with a history of colon cancer, usually we’ll lower that starting age to the age of 40.”

Polyps that are found by a colonoscopy are removed before they can develop into cancers, so screening is important as well as knowing your risk factors and how you can prevent this disease.

“We think a good proper diet and exercise will decrease your risk of colon cancer, however, there is a genetic factor.”

It’s that uncontrollable genetic factor that makes early screening important. Treatment for colon cancer includes surgery to remove the lesion, radiation and sometimes chemotherapy.

The death rate from colon cancer has been going down for the past 15 years, and that is because of early screening and improved treatments.

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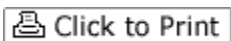
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