



## Early Detection of Colon Cancer Brings Lifesaving Benefits

If you had colon or rectal cancer, would you know it? This potentially fatal condition, which is also known as colorectal cancer, often has little or no symptoms until it's too late. That is why colon cancer screening is an important step to finding and successfully treating this condition in its earliest stage.

Early detection is crucial because early stage colon cancer is extremely treatable and often easily cured. In fact, if colon cancer is found early enough, there is a 93 percent survival rate at five years.\* The more advanced the stage of the disease when it is found, the lower the five year survival probability.

The latest American Cancer Society recommendations, which were released in March of 2008, call on people age 50 and over who are at average risk for this disease to undergo regular screenings, which include a colonoscopy every 10 years to detect colon cancer and polyps (which can be a precursor to colon cancer). Further, the guidelines

suggest that people who are at increased risk, such as those with a family history or personal history of polyps or colon cancer, or a history of inflammatory bowel disease affecting the colon, talk with their doctors about undergoing earlier and more frequent screenings.

A colonoscopy by a gastroenterologist, which is considered the "Gold Standard," generally takes only about 30 minutes to complete. Most patients choose to be sedated for comfort and are able to return home the same day, resuming normal activities the following day.

—John Dowd, DO, Seacoast Gastroenterology

**To schedule a colon cancer screening or to make an appointment with a gastroenterologist, talk to your primary care physician or call Exeter Hospital at 1-800-4-EXETER.**

\*National Comprehensive Cancer Network

**\* Colorectal cancer is one of the leading causes of cancer deaths for men and women in the United States, but with early detection, it is also treatable and preventable.\***

\*American Cancer Society



### Other Ways to Reduce Your Risks

Making simple lifestyle changes can help you prevent colorectal cancer, according to Wendy Lannon, MS, RN, ACSM-CES, Coordinator of Exeter Hospital's HealthReach Community Education program.

She offers the following American Cancer Society guidelines:

- Eat a low saturated fat, plant-based diet including at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day.
- Choose lean sources of protein (such as chicken and fish) and minimize red meat and processed foods (like hot dogs and cold cuts).
- Choose foods rich in calcium and Vitamin D: these have been associated, in a recent large-scale study, with a 30 percent lower risk of developing colorectal cancer.
- Exercise at a moderate pace for at least 30 minutes per day, five days per week. Increase to 45-60 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise for even greater benefits.
- Use alcohol in moderation: two drinks a day for men, one drink a day for women.
- Maintain a healthy weight.

Lannon also stresses that for people who already have the disease, a healthy diet and regular exercise can help prevent recurrence and improve survival rates after treatment.