

Public Health, Epidemiology and Prevention

PEP Talk

Pinellas County Health Department • February 2009

Let's Talk About It March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

What is colorectal cancer?

Colorectal cancer (sometimes called colon cancer) is cancer of the colon and/or rectum. It is equally common in both men and women. It is the third most common cancer in the U.S. and the third leading cause of cancer death for men and women.

Colorectal cancer is one of the most easily prevented cancers because it can develop from polyps. The polyps can be removed before they become cancerous. And if colon cancer is found and treated at its earliest stage, the five-year survival rate is 90 percent.

Did you know that YOU can prevent colon cancer?

Finding and removing polyps before they become cancerous can prevent colon cancer. When caught early, survival rates are high.

If you are at average risk for colorectal cancer, you should start having regular screening at age 50. If you are at greater risk, you may need to begin regular screening at an earlier age. The best time to get screened is before any symptoms appear.

Several colorectal cancer early detection tests are available:

- Fecal occult blood test (FOBT)
- Flexible sigmoidoscopy
- Double-contrast barium enema
- Colonoscopy

Talk with your doctor about what's best for you and *how often you should be tested.*

Are you at risk?

The risk of colon cancer increase with age. In fact, more than 90 percent of cases are diagnosed in individuals aged 50 and older.

Other risk factors include:

- Tobacco use.
- Obesity.
- Excessive alcohol consumption.
- Diet high in red meat or processed meat.
- Diet low in fruits and vegetables.
- Inactive or sedentary lifestyle.
- Personal or family history of colorectal cancer or benign (not cancerous) colorectal polyps.
- Personal or family history of inflammatory bowel disease, such as long-standing ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease.

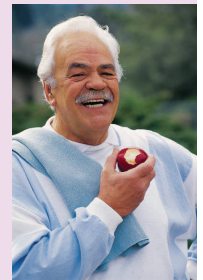
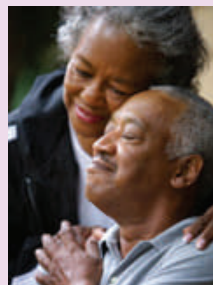
Did you know you can reduce your risk?

The most important thing you can do to reduce your risk of colorectal cancer is to be aware and get tested. Here are some other steps you can take:

- Be physically active and exercise regularly.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Eat a high-fiber diet rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- Limit red meat and avoid processed meats.
- Don't smoke.
- Don't drink alcohol excessively.

No more excuses! You have the power to stop colon cancer before it starts by getting tested. Because testing saves lives.

For more information, contact us or visit www.cancer.org



PEP Talk is a publication of the Pinellas County Health Department
205 Dr. Martin Luther King St. N.
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
PinCHD52@doh.state.fl.us.

February is National Children's Dental Health Month You Can Help Keep Your Kids' Teeth Healthy

When to Start Caring for Your Child's Teeth

Proper dental care begins even before your baby's first tooth appears. Remember: Just because you can't see the teeth, it doesn't mean they aren't there. A baby's teeth actually begin to form in the second trimester of pregnancy. At birth, your baby already has twenty primary teeth, some of which are fully developed in the jaw, they just don't show yet.

You can prevent a build-up of harmful bacteria by running a soft damp washcloth over your baby's gums after feedings. Once your child has a few teeth showing, you can brush them with a soft child's toothbrush or rub them with gauze at the end of the day.

Even babies can have problems with tooth



decay if you do not follow good feeding habits at home. It may seem convenient to use a bottle when putting your baby to sleep, for example, but it can harm your

baby's teeth. That's because when the sugar from juice or milk stays on a baby's teeth for hours, it may eat away at the tooth, creating a condition known as bottle mouth. Pocked, pitted, or discolored front teeth are signs of bottle mouth. Severe cases of bottle mouth result in cavities and the need to remove (pull) all the front teeth until the permanent teeth grow in.

Parents and day care providers should help young children develop set times for drinking during the day, since sucking on a bottle throughout the day can be equally harmful to young teeth.

Preventing Cavities

The American Dental Association recommends that a child's first visit to the dentist



should take place by the first birthday. At this visit, your dentist will tell you about proper brushing and flossing (you need to floss your baby's teeth once your baby has two teeth that touch each other). The dentist will also do a modified dental exam while your baby sits on your lap.

These visits can help find potential problems early. They also help children get used to visiting the dentist so they won't be afraid of going to dentist as they grow older.

Brushing at least twice a day

and routine flossing will help maintain a healthy mouth. Children as young as age two or three can begin to use toothpaste when they brush their teeth, as long as they are supervised. Kids should not swallow large amounts of toothpaste. A pea-sized amount for toddlers is just right. You should always make sure your child spits out the toothpaste instead of swallowing it.



As your child's permanent teeth grow in, your dentist can help seal out decay by applying a thin wash of resin to the back teeth, where most chewing occurs. This protective coating, known as a sealant, keeps bacteria from settling in the hard-to-reach crevices of the molars.

A dentist's care is only part of keeping your child's teeth healthy. Follow-up at home is just as important. For example, sealants on the teeth do not mean that your child can eat sweets all the time or slack off on daily brushing and flossing. You must work with your kids to teach them good oral health habits.



With a good start from you, your children are sure to have a lifetime of healthy smiles!