



AGING TODAY

Colonoscopy is a crystal ball

By Bob Roth, Managing Partner of Cypress HomeCare Solutions



Have you ever just wished for a crystal ball, an opportunity to peer into the future for a concrete fact to help make a decision? Does this 60-minute window give me enough time to make a connecting flight? Should I travel ahead of schedule based on the weather forecast of treacherous driving conditions?

As we get older and become wiser, we plan and do our best to mitigate risk. Often, the testament to our maturity is when we observe our kids make decisions with an aura of invincibility. To my fellow Baby Boomers, I am trying to grapple with this disconnect. If you have not been screened for colon cancer, you are ignoring a crystal ball with this same aura of invincibility.

Since March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, there is no better time to emphasize the importance of getting screened. If you're 50 or older or have a history of colon cancer in your family, get in touch with your medical provider and schedule your screening today. Cancer screenings save lives. Colon cancer is the No. 2 killer cancer, but with early detection and removal of precancerous polyps, chances of survival exceed 90 percent.

Complete colonoscopy is the gold standard for detection. The colonoscopy is the only test that allows a biopsy or removal of a polyp at the very same time when it is first identified by the doctor with no follow up test needed.

If cancer is present, a colonoscopy can help catch it early, when treatment is most effective. Colon cancer is the third most commonly diagnosed cancer in the U.S., yet men and women routinely avoid getting screened because, more than a diagnosis, they fear the test itself.

The colonoscopy consists of a day of cleansing, followed by the procedure the next day. Admittedly the test can appear unnerving. Don't listen to all your friends complain. Think of all the other ways in which you journey outside your comfort zone guided by a positive outcome. Who really loves airplane travel these days? Who would sign up for being packed into such a cramped space while getting tossed a pack of peanuts like an animal in the zoo, if not for your grandchildren or a tropical paradise waiting at the other end?

If you are the one passing on the 411 regarding the colonoscopy in the form of a complaint, do your friends a favor and resist the urge to earn your battle stripes. I know how good it feels to vent after a medical milestone, but wouldn't you like to encourage rather than discourage such a proactive stance towards good health?

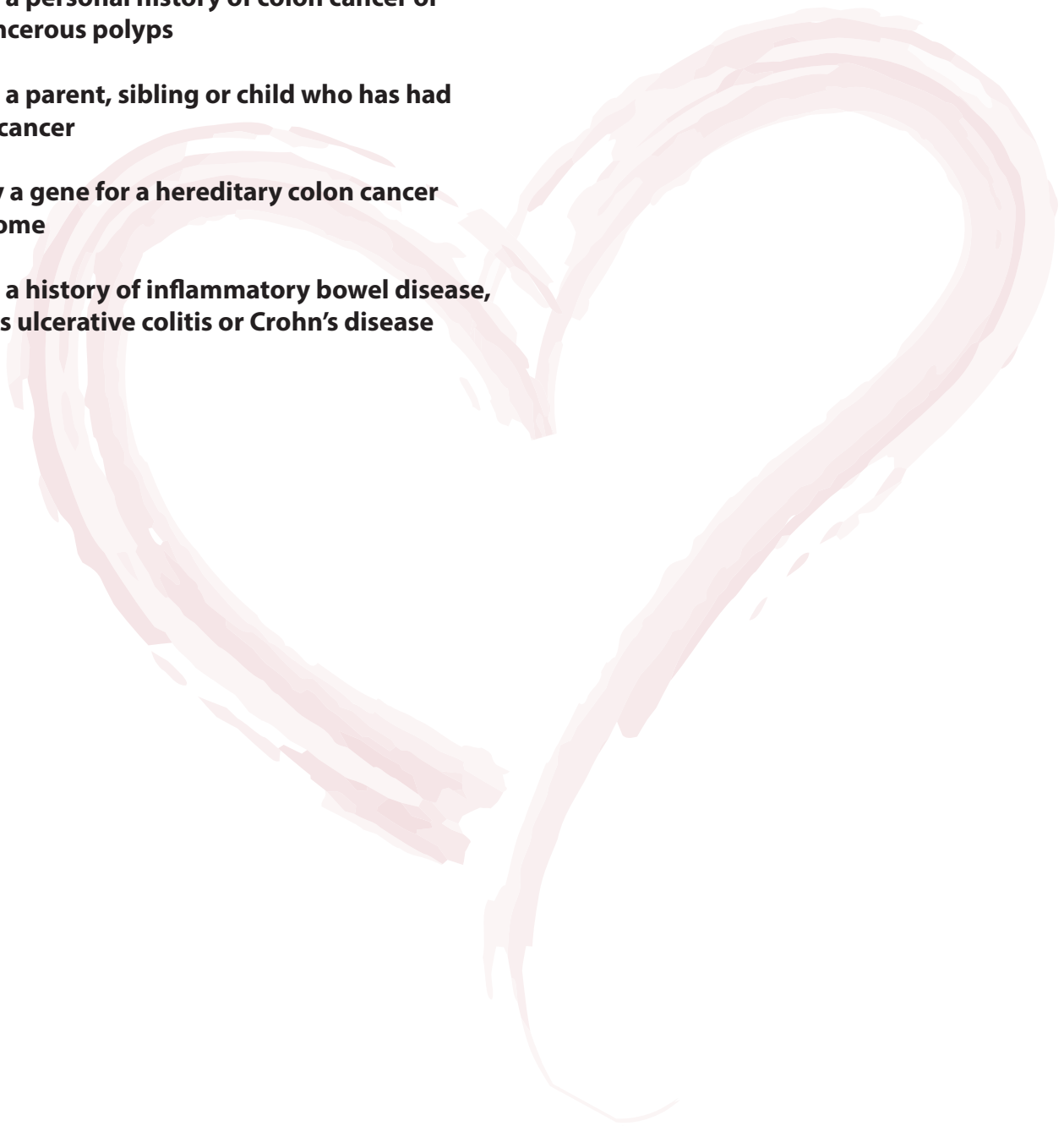
It is a fact that most people who have colon cancer – or polyps that could potentially turn cancerous – have no symptoms. Getting screened, then, is a great way to stay ahead of cancer. Once symptoms are present – such as rectal bleeding, persistent abdominal discomfort, fatigue and unexplained weight loss – the cancer can be in advanced stages. When you consider the colonoscopy in the scheme of a cancer diagnosis, surgical resection of a tumor and chemotherapy, I don't know who wouldn't jump at the opportunity to spend some time on the throne preparing for the test.

I'd like to conclude this discussion of colon health by channeling my inner Seinfeld. You know what's really confusing? The semicolon; I never know when to use it. Technically based on the prefix it is half as confusing as the colon. That is certainly not my experience; I find it twice as confusing. There is no confusion regarding the colon; **Get Screened.**

Hey do I get credit for the “big salad” for trying that bit?

Talk to your doctor about your colon cancer risk if you:

- **Have a personal history of colon cancer or precancerous polyps**
- **Have a parent, sibling or child who has had colon cancer**
- **Carry a gene for a hereditary colon cancer syndrome**
- **Have a history of inflammatory bowel disease, such as ulcerative colitis or Crohn’s disease**



This column was published in [Jewish News](#) and [Lovin’ Life After 50](#) as Cypress’ monthly contribution.