



AGING TODAY

An ounce of prevention is a pound of cure



By Bob Roth, Managing Partner of Cypress HomeCare Solutions

In April 2019 our home care agency Cypress HomeCare Solutions, locally family owned and operated, celebrated 25 years of serving our community. We have been blessed to have the privilege to serve so many incredible families assisting their loved ones so that they could “age in place.”

Over the past 25 years we have served over 10,000 clients and their families giving their loved ones the opportunity to remain independent by providing care services right in the comfort of their own home.

Through medical breakthroughs and new discoveries we have learned that as much as we may choose to live a healthy lifestyle complete with exercise, eating healthy and eliminating stress from our lives, we may find ourselves in a position where we may be genetically predisposed to certain illnesses and diseases that others may not be. The adage that an ounce of prevention is a pound of cure is so true in cases of those individuals that are predisposed to certain health challenges. Remember knowledge is power.

No cancer may be completely avoidable, but there is one that can be prevented but all you have to do is get screened. This month of March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness month, and yes, colorectal cancer is both preventable and or avoidable if caught early enough.

This year it is estimated that there will be over 145,600 adults in the US will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer. In the United States, colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of cancer-related deaths in men and in women, and the second most common cause of cancer deaths when men and women are combined. It's expected to cause about 53,200 deaths during 2020.

While a colonoscopy is not a perfect test, it dramatically reduces both the risks of getting colon cancer or dying from the disease.

There are other screening tests available, including various stool tests, sigmoidoscopy, virtual colonoscopy, and now there is even a blood test you can take. The colonoscopy remains the gold standard, it should be noted that at least some screening is better than none.

Below are some fundamentals behind getting screened provided by the American College of Gastroenterology.

- Colorectal cancer, second only to lung cancer as the leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States, affects men and women equally. Yet few Americans know that colorectal cancer can be prevented—not just detected—through colonoscopy.
- Colorectal cancer arises from pre-cancerous growths or polyps that grow in the colon. When detected early, polyps can be removed, halting their progression to colorectal cancer. While early detection of any cancer is important, prevention is powerful.
- Many people don't realize that this second-leading cancer killer is highly preventable. Unlike other cancer screenings which can only detect a problem, colorectal cancer screening with colonoscopy can prevent colorectal cancer by removing precancerous polyps during the exam.
- Under-use of proven screening tests—especially among Medicare beneficiaries: 1 in 3 adults—almost 23 million Americans between 50 and 75 years old—is not getting tested for colorectal cancer as recommended.

According to the American Cancer Society, the colon cancer death rate in this country could be cut in half if Americans simply followed recommended screening guidelines. This year, more than 53,000 people are expected to die of colorectal cancer in the United States.

- The digestive health specialists from the American College of Gastroenterology urge you to be screened for colorectal cancer.
- Talk to your doctor about the screening test that is right for you. The American College of Gastroenterology recommends colonoscopy as the preferred cancer prevention strategy.
- African Americans are likely to be diagnosed with colorectal cancer at younger ages than Caucasians, and they experience decreased survival compared with Caucasians. It is recommended that African Americans begin colorectal cancer screening at age 45, rather than at age 50 for average-risk patients.

An important thing to note, is that most early colorectal cancers produce no symptoms. This is the reason why screening for colorectal cancer is so important. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms see your doctor immediately. Some possible symptoms:

- New onset of abdominal pain
- Blood in stool or change in stool shape
- Change in bowel habit

I am sad to report that over the past 25 years we have served our community we have lost far too many clients to colorectal cancer. As we begin the month of March, let's take note that March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness month, in addition March 6 is dress in blue day for colorectal cancer awareness. If you see me this Friday, you will see that I will be wearing blue, letting the world know that I have joined the mission to end colorectal cancer.

If you have not been screened make it a priority to get an appointment to visit with your primary care physician. Talk to him/her about scheduling your screening. Do it not only for yourself, but for those you love. Remember knowledge is power and just one screening can save your life.

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