



St. Mary's County Health Department

NEWS RELEASE

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COLORECTAL SCREENING CAN OFFER PEACE OF MIND

LEONARDTOWN, MD (March 20, 2006)– “Colorectal cancer (cancer of the colon and rectum) is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States, behind lung cancer. In 2005, the American Cancer Society projected close to 2,800 new cases of colorectal cancer in Maryland and approximately 1,100 deaths from the disease,” reports Karen Russell, M.S., R.N., Wellness and Health Promotion Program Manager at St. Mary's County Health Department.

“Despite these numbers, many people who should be screened for colorectal cancer never get the test(s) that can identify the cancer in its early and curable stages,” Russell adds. In fact, colorectal cancer rates can be reduced by an estimated 70–90 percent through early screening with colonoscopy. Colonoscopy can also remove pre-cancerous growths or polyps in the large intestines.

The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Center for Cancer Surveillance and Control recommends screening for people ages 50 and over; those with a personal or family history of colorectal cancer or adenomatous (pre-cancerous) polyps and individuals with history of inflammatory bowel disease (ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease), and women with cancer of the ovary or endometrium need to start screening before they are 50.

March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. “Our job is to educate the public about colorectal cancer and the need to be screened, as well as encourage doctors to recommend the appropriate screening test(s). Once people know the benefits of early screening they are more open to the idea of being screened,” reports Russell.

For more information or to schedule a colorectal cancer presentation for your organization or group, call Marsha Adamo, R.N. at 301-475-4074.

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