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**March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month
*Oswego Health is saving lives through prevention awareness***

**(Oswego, NY – February 27, 2023)** Colorectal cancer is one of the most common cancers in both men and women and is also one of the most preventable. Oswego Health is working to save lives through prevention awareness. With March being National Colorectal Cancer Awareness month, Oswego Health is reminding the community of the importance of early screening and what we can do to minimize the chances of getting colorectal cancer.

Colorectal cancer is a leading cause of cancer death in the United States, according to the [American Cancer Society](https://oswegohealth.netreturns.biz/healthinfo/bouncelink.aspx?shortcut=cancersoc) (ACS). There are steps you can take to help protect yourself.

Regular screening and healthy lifestyle choices can help prevent the disease altogether. If cancer does develop, screening can help detect it early, when it is much easier to treat effectively.

Most colorectal cancers start as abnormal growths, called polyps, on the lining of the intestine. These polyps can be removed before they develop into cancer. Many early colorectal cancers can also be treated successfully.

Screening is the best tool for finding polyps or colorectal cancer early. The United States Preventative Services Taskforce and the ACS recommends that people at average risk for colorectal cancer start screening at age 45. Some effective options include:

* Fecal occult blood test every year.
* Stool DNA test every three years.
* Colonoscopy every 10 years. (A colonoscopy continues to be the gold standard of care.)

Your doctor can help you decide which screening program is right for you. If you have risk factors, such as a family history of colorectal cancer, polyps or inflammatory bowel disease, your doctor may recommend that you start screening earlier or be screened more often.

Your doctor can also help you decide when to stop screening. For people ages 76 to 85, the decision to screen for colorectal cancer should be an individual one.

You can also take steps to lower your risk by making healthy lifestyle choices. The [American Institute for Cancer Research](https://oswegohealth.netreturns.biz/healthinfo/bouncelink.aspx?shortcut=aicr) recommends the following:

* Limit intake of red meat, such as beef and lamb, to no more than 18 ounces (cooked weight) a week.
* Avoid processed meat, such as hot dogs, ham, bacon and sausage.
* Know the risks of alcohol. Colorectal cancer has been linked to drinking alcohol.
* Maintain a healthy weight.
* Be physically active for at least a half hour a day.

Some colorectal cancer can't be prevented, but it can be treated. The ACS says to check with your doctor if you have:

* Diarrhea, constipation or another change in bowel habits for more than a few days.
* Cramping or steady stomach pain.
* Blood in your stool or from your rectum.

Having symptoms doesn't necessarily mean you have cancer, but they should always be investigated. Getting them checked could ease your mind, and it could save your life.

Need to schedule a screening? Contact the specialists at the **Center for Gastroenterology & Metabolic Diseases** at 315-312-0089.

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**About Oswego Health:**
The mission of Oswego Health is to provide accessible, quality care and improve the health of residents throughout Oswego County. As a nonprofit healthcare system established in 1881, Oswego Health is proud to continue to be one of Oswego County’s largest employers. More than 1,200 employees spread throughout its 17 locations, work for the Oswego Health system, which includes the 132-bed community Oswego Hospital, a 32-bed psychiatric acute-care facility with multiple outpatient behavioral health service locations, The Manor at Seneca Hill, a 120-bed skilled nursing facility, and Springside at Seneca Hill, an independent retirement community.  The health system also operates Oswego Health Home Care, the only hospital-based certified home healthcare agency in the County as well as two outpatient centers, including the Fulton Medical Center, offering urgent care, lab, medical imaging, physical therapy, and occupational health services, and the Central Square Medical Center, offering urgent care, lab, medical imaging, and physical therapy services. In addition, Oswego Health includes the Oswego Health captive professional corporation, Physician Care P.C., providing physician services in orthopedics, cardiology, ENT, gastroenterology, breast care, audiology, general surgery, bariatrics, and primary care. For more information about Oswego Health, please visit our website at  [www.oswegohealth.org](http://www.oswegohealth.org/).