

For Immediate Release
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Colon Cancer in the Coachella Valley

Colon cancer, or colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States. ***In this Press Release, we provide information and statistics about Colon Cancer in the Coachella Valley, the disease, symptoms, factors to look for, and how to take steps towards preventing colon cancer.***

Palm Desert, CA (March 1, 2018) — About 10.8% of the Coachella Valley population, around 33,116 people, have some type of cancer. Of those with cancer, 4.5% or about 1,491 people have colon cancer, which is the second leading cause of cancer related deaths in the United States. While there are many deaths attributed to colon cancer, the disease is preventable and can be detected and treated with proper screening. Typically, colon cancer is found in people aged 50 or older, so regular screening intervals at this age are highly recommended. With the month of March underway, a month dedicated to colon cancer awareness, it is an opportune time to review information about how to detect and prevent colon cancer.

What is Colorectal Cancer?

Colorectal cancer, or colon cancer, as the name suggests, is cancer of the rectum or colon. Specifically, colon cancer involves the excessive division of cells and the formation of tumors in the large intestine.

Colon cancer typically begins as a small precancerous polyp or abnormal growth. With early screening, the polyp can be removed before turning into cancer. However, sometimes the illness manifests without any symptoms, making it that much more important to receive regular screenings.

Signs and Symptoms

While symptoms are not always present, sometimes there are signs and symptoms to watch for. Some symptoms of colon cancer include 1) having blood in or on your feces, 2) having stomach pain, aches, or cramps that don't go away, and 3) losing weight and not knowing why. However, it is important to emphasize that many conditions can cause these symptoms so be sure to see your doctor if you have any of these symptoms.

Proper screening from your provider is the best method for approaching detection of the disease.

Risk Factors

Some risk factors for colon cancer are not within our control. These uncontrollable factors for developing colon cancer include inflammatory bowel disease, family history of colon cancer, colon polyps, genetic syndromes such as familial adenomatous polyposis, and having Lynch syndrome. However, there are certain risk factors that can be controlled. For example, decreasing risk can be accomplished through making healthy lifestyle choices: regular physical activity, eating a nutritious diet (high fruit/vegetable intake, high fiber, low fat), maintaining a healthy weight range, and not smoking tobacco.

Screening

Several types of screening tests may be performed to detect colon cancer, including: stool tests, flexible sigmoidoscopies, colonoscopies, and CT colonographies. The type of test that is needed will depend on the circumstances of the individual. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends that those who are age 50 or older should be screened for colon cancer regularly, until the age of 75. After age 75, individuals should consult with their healthcare provider as to whether colon cancer screening is needed.

HARC's 2016 data reveals that there are a large portion of older adults that are not obtaining regular screenings for colon cancer. Despite the suggested recommendations for annual check-ups, 30.5% of adults aged 50 or older (46,422 people) in the Coachella Valley have not had a colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy to check for colon cancer. Additionally, about 48.7% of adults aged 50 or older (73,246 people) have not had a blood stool test, to screen for the cancer. Clearly, a significant portion of the population is in need of colon cancer screening.

To see more statistics regarding health information and other major diseases in the Coachella Valley, you can visit: <http://survey.HARCdata.org>

To schedule an interview with Dr. Jenna LeComte-Hinely call 760.404.1945 or email Jlecomte-hinely@HARCdata.org.

About HARC

HARC, Inc. (Health Assessment and Research for Communities) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization providing research and evaluation services related to health and wellness. HARC is funded in part by grants, donations, and the consulting services they offer. More information can be obtained by calling HARC at 760.404.1945, or visiting the organization's website at www.HARCdata.org