**March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month**

The world may have changed, but colorectal cancer has not. Colorectal cancer is still the third most common cancer in the US, and the second leading cause of cancer death. This disease takes the lives of more than 50,000 people every year. It affects people of all genders across all racial and ethnic groups, with minority populations experiencing disparities in access to screening and later stage diagnoses. Colorectal cancer is most often found in people 50 years or older; however, incidence in those younger than 50 is on the rise. The American Cancer Society estimates that the number of colorectal cancer cases in the United States for 2022 will be:

* 106,180 new cases of colon cancer
* 44,850 new cases of rectal cancer

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, colorectal cancer screenings dropped roughly 90% and diagnoses fell by 32%. Screening numbers still aren’t back to where they were before the start of the pandemic. This puts more people in the US at risk for delayed or missed diagnoses and will lead to additional deaths from this preventable disease.

**Why is screening important?**

Colorectal cancer (cancer of the colon or rectum) is very treatable when it is discovered early. Even if it spreads into nearby lymph nodes, surgical treatment followed by chemotherapy is very effective. In the most advanced cases—when the cancer has spread to the liver, lungs, or other sites—treatment can often make surgery an option and can prolong and add to quality of life. Research is constantly being done to learn more and provide hope for people in all colorectal cancer stages.

**When should you get screened?**

The American Cancer Society recommends colorectal cancer screening at 45-75 years old for those with average colorectal cancer risk. Individual risk factors–such as ethnicity, lifestyle, and family history–will determine when someone should start getting checked.

**Did you know?**

* The average lifetime risk for men = 1 in 23.
* The average lifetime risk for women = 1 in 25.
* African Americans and those of Ashkenazi Jewish descent are at highest risk and additional screenings may be recommended.
* There is more than one option for screening—some of them can even be done in your own home! You can ask your doctor about what options are best for you.

**What can you do?**

* Get screened if you’re eligible! (For those at average risk, that means everyone 45+ years old.)
* Learn more! Visit [Understanding Colorectal Cancer](https://www.cancer.org/cancer/colon-rectal-cancer.html) on the American Cancer Society website.
* Encourage your friends and loved ones to get screened.
* Raise awareness with social media using **#getscreened** or **#colorectalcancerawarenessmonth**, and by including this signature graphic in your signature in the month of March!

