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### **Prevent cancer, get screened during Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month**

CHARLEVOIX – Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in the United States—but it doesn't have to be. This disease is highly preventable with regular screening. During March's Colorectal Cancer Awareness campaign, the Health Department of Northwest Michigan urges everyone 50 years of age and older to get screened.

While most health insurance plans cover the costs of colorectal screening, those without insurance or who have high deductibles may be hesitant about seeking care. In situations like these, the Health Department can help. The Health Department offers free colorectal cancer screenings year-round for eligible clients.

Joy Klooster coordinates the Colorectal Cancer Screening Program at the Health Department and works directly with clients during the enrollment and screening process. "If you're 50-64 years old and meet certain income requirements, you may be eligible to receive free colorectal screenings and preventative services through the Health Department," she said. She encourages anyone interested in the program to call **(800) 432-4121**.

Klooster explained that routine screening is important because colorectal cancer doesn't always cause symptoms, especially early on. When symptoms *do* appear, they may include blood in the stool, stomach pain or cramps, and weight loss.

Many types of colorectal cancer screenings are available, including simple at-home tests like the Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT). To determine the best screening option, individuals should discuss colorectal screening with their physicians or health care providers.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advise regular screening for men and women age 50-75, as risk increases with age. More than 90% of colorectal cancers occur in patients older than 50 years.

To find out if you qualify for enrollment in the Colorectal Cancer Screening Program, call the Health Department at **(800) 432-4121** or visit [www.nwhealth.org](http://www.nwhealth.org) for more information. The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego Counties.

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