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**HEALTH
DEPARTMENT**
of Northwest Michigan

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March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month offers a perfect opportunity to talk to your doctor and ask yourself, as well as family and friends, if it is time for colorectal cancer screening.

Colorectal cancer remains the nation's second-leading cause of cancer-related deaths for men and women. Early detection is key to discovering cancer before a person experiences any signs or symptoms. Regular screenings save lives by identifying cancers when they are most curable and treatment is most likely to be successful. In Michigan in 2017, the American Cancer Society estimates there will be 4,660 cases of colorectal cancer and 1,680 deaths due to the disease.

“Adults age 50 and older should be regularly screened for colorectal cancer. Unfortunately many people aren't getting tested because they don't believe they are at risk or they aren't aware of the different testing and screening options,” said Joy Klooster, Colorectal Cancer Screening Program Coordinator, with the Health Department of Northwest Michigan. “The importance of early detection cannot be overstated. This Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, make it a priority to discuss the different testing options with your provider.”

Through the Michigan Colorectal Cancer Early Detection Program, men and women from Michigan, aged 50-64, who have no insurance or insurance that does not cover colon cancer screening and are income eligible can receive colorectal cancer screening virtually at no cost. Screening includes a health risk assessment. Through this assessment, the participant may be eligible for a Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) – a simple do at home kit for detection of blood in the stool – or a colonoscopy which is provided through a partnership with area physicians and hospitals. To find out if you qualify for enrollment, call (800) 432-4121 for more information.

Colorectal cancer risk increases after age 50. However, if you have a family history of colorectal cancer or pre-cancerous polyps, talk with your doctor about starting testing before age 50. Many cases of colorectal cancer have no symptoms especially early on when it can be more effectively treated.

Many health insurance plans cover lifesaving preventive tests; to find out the details of what colorectal cancer screening is covered, check your plan. For the uninsured, preventing colorectal cancer or finding it early doesn't have to be expensive. There are simple, affordable tests available for colorectal cancer screening.

Through proper colorectal cancer screening, doctors can find and remove hidden growths (called “polyps”) in the colon before they become cancerous. Removing polyps can prevent cancer altogether.

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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