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**Health Department urges people to get screened during March, Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month**

CHARLEVOIX, Mich. – The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is participating in Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month and reminding community members to get screened. Screenings are covered by most health plans. People without health coverage or insufficient coverage may be eligible for screenings at no cost as part of the Michigan Colorectal Cancer Early Detection Program at the health department.

Colorectal cancer often causes no signs or symptoms in its early stages. Screening starting at age 50 is vital for both prevention and detection of colorectal cancer, the third most common cancer in the United States.

“Colorectal cancer can be deadly. It’s the second leading cause of death from cancer,” said Joy Klooster, RN, Colorectal Cancer Coordinator at the Health Department of Northwest Michigan. “People sometimes delay their colorectal screenings because they are a bit uncomfortable or awkward, but they’re very important.”

People age 50 and older are at the highest risk and should be screened every 5-10 years. People may also be at higher risk if they smoke. Certain risk factors, such as a family history of colorectal cancer, may indicate a need to start screenings at a younger age.

For resources for uninsured residents, and for more information about testing and prevention, contact the Health Department of Northwest Michigan at 1-800-432-4121.

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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