



Important News from the DPH Colorectal Cancer Program and DPH Genomics Office:

March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month!

Colorectal cancer is the third most commonly diagnosed cancer and the third leading cause of cancer death in both men and women in the US. In 2015, the American Cancer Society estimates that there will be 1,580 new cases of colorectal cancer resulting in 440 deaths in Connecticut. Screening for colorectal cancer has been demonstrated to be effective in reducing the incidence of and mortality from the disease.

The risk of getting colorectal cancer increases with age. More than 90% of cases occur in people who are 50 years old or older. Colorectal cancer screening saves lives, but many people are not being screened according to national guidelines. If you're 50 years old or older, getting a screening test for colorectal cancer could save your life. Here's how—

- Colorectal cancer screening tests can find precancerous polyps so they can be removed before they turn into cancer. In this way, colorectal cancer is prevented.
- Screening tests also can find colorectal cancer early, when treatment often leads to a cure.

Precancerous polyps and colorectal cancer don't always cause symptoms, especially at first. You could have polyps or colorectal cancer and not know it. That is why having a screening test is so important. You should begin screening for colorectal cancer soon after turning 50, and then keep getting screened regularly until the age of 75. Ask your doctor if you should be screened if you're older than 75.

For a Colon Cancer health tree in English & Spanish, see: http://www.ccalliance.org/shopcca/free_downloads.html

March 22 is National Lynch Syndrome* Awareness Day

* Hereditary Nonpolyposis Colorectal Cancer

It is important to learn more about your risk for any colorectal cancer because every day, about 400 people in the United States are diagnosed with colorectal cancer. However, **Lynch syndrome**, also called hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer (HNPCC) is the most common cause of *hereditary* colorectal and endometrial cancers; it also causes people to be at increased risk for several other cancers, which often occur at a younger than average age. **Lynch syndrome** occurs among men and women in all ethnic groups in the United States. Through family health history collection and further genetic screening, identifying people with **Lynch syndrome** could have substantial health benefits for them and their families.

A diagnosis of **Lynch syndrome** in individuals who do not have cancer offers an opportunity to 1) enhance cancer prevention and screening measures for patients and families, 2) prevent cancer or detect it earlier, and 3) save lives and costs. ¹

Colorectal Cancer (CRC) and Family History

- It is estimated that 5 to 10 percent of colorectal cancer cases are hereditary.²
- **Lynch syndrome** is one of the **most** understood forms of inherited CRC:
 - An estimated three out of every 100 colorectal cancers are thought to be caused by Lynch syndrome.³
 - For people with Lynch syndrome, the lifetime risk of developing colorectal cancer by age 70 is about 45% for men and 35% for women.⁴

- The syndrome is also associated with an increased risk for cancers of the uterus, ovary, stomach, small intestine, liver, bile duct, urinary tract, and the brain and central nervous system.
- The average age for a person with **Lynch syndrome** to be diagnosed with colorectal cancer is 44 as compared with the average age of 72 for a new diagnosis of colorectal cancer in the general population.⁵
- There is sufficient evidence to recommend genetic testing for **Lynch syndrome** to all individuals with newly diagnosed CRC to reduce morbidity and mortality in relatives.⁶

Tools to promote family history awareness of Lynch Syndrome

- **For Clinicians**

- “Cancer Genomics Best Practices for Connecticut Healthcare Providers”, produced by the CT DPH Genomics Office: http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/genomics/hp2020_actionproj_ca_genomics_best_practices.pdf
- CDC summary of the EGAPP recommendation statement on genetic testing for **Lynch syndrome**: <http://www.cdc.gov/genomics/gtesting/EGAPP/recommend/lynch.htm>

- **For the Public**

- Family PLZ: Website for young adults about colon cancer risk, at: <http://familyplz.org/>
- What You Should Know About Colon Cancer, American Cancer Society, at: <http://www.cancer.org/cancer/news/coloncancer-prevention-and-early-detection-what-you-need-to-know>
- Hereditary Colorectal Cancer page, CT DPH website: <http://www.ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3134&q=436320>
- Genetic Testing for hereditary colorectal cancer, CDC: <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/LynchSyndrome/>
- My Family Health Portrait, U.S. Surgeon General’s family health history collection tool, available at: <https://familyhistory.hhs.gov/FHH>