

Over 50???... Put Fears of Colon Cancer Behind You

By Shekhar Challa, MD

Board Certified Gastroenterologist

President, Kansas Medical Clinic

For years I have been “preaching” to have a screening colonoscopy when one turns 50. A few months ago it was my turn, and when it comes to your own screening you tend to rationalize and try to justify putting it off. After some procrastinating, I decided to lead by example and I went ahead and had my colonoscopy. The procedure itself was a “breeze,” but the preparation was an inconvenience, having to be close to a bathroom at all times. It was all worthwhile with “all clear” results, and I shouldn’t need to have another screening colonoscopy for 10 years.

Will I do it again? YES... the peace of mind is worth it. If one is destined to have colon cancer, screening before symptoms occur is the best way to “catch” polyps and remove them. Removing precancerous polyps essentially prevents colon cancer from developing. In addition, if one already has colon cancer, the screening typically catches it in the early stages and has a 90% chance of a cure. We have control over some things in life and stopping colon cancer is definitely one of them.

More than 50,000 Americans die annually from undetected or late-stage colon cancer. It is my hope that over the next several years, colon cancer prevention will continue to gain acceptance and one day we will be screening 100% of the population.

Facts about colon cancer:

- 148,000 people were diagnosed with Colorectal Cancer in 2007.
- Colon cancer does not discriminate and can affect any race, gender or age.
- 75% of patients with colon cancer have no family history.
- When symptoms start it is usually too late as the cancer would be in the late stages and survival rates are lower.
- Precancerous polyps form in the colon or rectum and remain benign for 3 to 10 years. A colonoscopy can remove these polyps thus preventing colon cancer.
- Medicare and most insurance plans cover screening colonoscopies.
- You are at higher risk for colon cancer if you have a family history of polyps or cancer.

You take the time for routine physicals, mammograms, Pap smears, dental appointments, etc. Starting at age 50 (or earlier if you are high risk), you need to have a screening colonoscopy performed every 10 years or more frequently depending on your medical and family history. Now is the time to make a screening colonoscopy a part of living your healthy lifestyle.

About KMC Gastroenterology

KMC Gastroenterology is a well-established G.I. group in the Northeast Kansas area. Ashraf M. Sufi, M.D., Jerry Feagan, M.D., and Shekhar Challa, M.D. perform thousands of endoscopic procedures including screening

colonoscopies and provide sensitive, reliable patient care. For more information about a screening colonoscopy please call 785-354-8518 or visit our website at www.KMCPA.com