Six Simple Steps to Reducing Your Risk of Colon Cancer

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New York, NY (PRWEB) February 25, 2014 -- March is Colon Cancer Awareness Month.

Colon cancer, the second-leading cause of cancer death in the United States, is often preventable and highly curable.

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Dr. Benjamin Lebwohl, a gastroenterologist at NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia University Medical Center, adds, “DESPITE THE AVAILABILITY OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE SCREENING TESTS, APPROXIMATELY ONE-THIRD OF AMERICANS ARE NOT GETTING SCREENED FOR COLORECTAL CANCER ACCORDING TO NATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS. THIS TRANSLATES TO ROUGHLY 20 MILLION ADULTS, ACCORDING TO THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION.”

Drs. Schnoll-Sussman and Lebwohl provide six facts that everyone should know to help reduce their risk of colon cancer.

• Get screened—it could save your life.
  Screening can detect early cancers as well as polyps before they become cancer. Men and women should begin screening at age 50.

• Screening for colorectal cancer is effective.
  The death rate from colorectal cancer has been falling in recent years, largely due to the adoption of widespread screening. Screening can detect cancer early, or—even more importantly—can find polyps that could become cancer if left undiscovered.

• Screening is done when you feel well.
  Colon polyps and early cancers often cause no symptoms. You could have a precancerous polyp or even colon cancer and not know it. This is why screening—before symptoms occur—is essential!

• Know your risk factors.
  Certain risk factors may require screening to be performed at a younger age. These include inflammatory bowel disease, a personal or family history of colon cancer, large colon polyps, or certain hereditary conditions that can cause colon cancer, such as Lynch syndrome or familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP). Ask your doctor about when to start screening if you have any of these risk factors.

• Put down that cigarette and get moving.
  There are a few lifestyle changes you can make to reduce your risk, such as quitting smoking, avoiding excess
intake of red and processed meats, maintaining a healthy body weight, and exercise. Smokers also have an increased risk of developing colon cancer. Replace those cigarettes with colorful fruits and vegetables!

- Remember, colon cancer does not discriminate.

One in 20 people are diagnosed with cancer of the colon or rectum in their lifetime, and the disease affects both men and women. While those with a family history of colon polyps or cancer are at increased risk and need to begin screening at a younger age, the vast majority of people who develop colon cancer have no family history of the disease.

NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital
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