



**Press Release**  
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## **The Case for Discussing Colorectal Cancer with your Physician**

*Education and screenings are critical to prevent complications from the disease.*

KNOX CITY, Texas (March 12, 2021) – Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a sustained reduction in the number of people referred, diagnosed, and treated for colorectal cancer. This trend has many physicians concerned as colorectal cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the U.S.

In fact, excluding skin cancers, colorectal cancer is the third most diagnosed disease in the nation. Despite the dangers, the disease typically can be treated if detected early through advanced screening.

Generally referred to as colon cancer, the disease is characterized by tumor growth in the colon or rectum. Estimates show that approximately 4.4 percent of men and 4.1 percent of women will be diagnosed with the disease in their lifetime.

“While coronavirus remains a threat to us all, cancer patients and survivors are at an increased risk of complications if they were to become infected,” explains Dr. Laura Hart, a physician in Knox City. “Appropriate measures must continue to be made to protect ourselves and each other from COVID-19. That also means that we should never put off preventive healthcare screenings. Especially if you are at risk of certain cancers.”

According to the American Cancer Society, almost 148,000 new cases of colorectal cancer will be diagnosed annually in the U.S. through 2022. Furthermore, the disease is expected to cause more than 53,000 deaths per year.

Over the past year, there has been a significant reduction in appointments made with primary care physicians because of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, possible cancers, such as that of the colon, can potentially go undiagnosed.

“You should never postpone preventative healthcare,” Dr. Hart stresses. “If you notice a change in your body, especially if you begin to exhibit symptoms of colorectal cancer, then you should immediately request an appointment with your primary care provider to discuss it.”

Symptoms of colorectal cancer commonly include persistent stomach aches and pains, bleeding from the rectum, blood in the stool or the toilet after a bowel movement, dark or black stools, or sudden weight loss.

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Individuals over the age of 50 are most at risk. Those who have a family history of the disease are also at an increased risk. In many cases, the early stages of colorectal cancer often have no symptoms. It is not until after tumors grow that bleeding or blocked intestines occur.

Typical with most cancers, the best outcomes of colorectal cancer are attained in those diagnosed and treated at an early stage.

Dr. Hart says there are several screenings available to test for colorectal cancer.

Fecal blood tests are sometimes ordered, which are used to detect hidden blood in feces. Procedures such as flexible sigmoidoscopy and colonoscopy are also effective methods to check for colon cancer. In some cases, a double-contrast barium enema might also be used for screening, an x-ray examination that allows a radiologist to view the entire colon.

Your medical provider can recommend the best screening method based on your symptoms and medical history.

Medicare and many private health insurance plans cover routine tests for colorectal cancer. A referral from your medical provider is required.

For more information about colorectal cancer, your risks, and whether screening is proper for you, please talk with your primary medical provider. You can also schedule a local appointment at Knox City Clinic or Munday Clinic. For locations and telephone numbers, please visit [www.knoxhospital.org](http://www.knoxhospital.org).

### **About Knox County Hospital District**

Founded in 1926, Knox County Hospital District provides healthcare for residents of Knox County and surrounding areas. The district offers a wealth of medical services, including 24-hour emergency care, advanced radiology services, a clinical laboratory, home health, physical therapy, long-term care, patient education, and more. For additional information, please call 940-657-3535 or visit [www.knoxhospital.org](http://www.knoxhospital.org).

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