

**Press Release**

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Knox County Hospital District Promotes Colon Cancer Prevention*Local Clinics Offer Screening Options and Prevention Tips*

KNOX CITY, Texas (March 14, 2025) – Knox County Hospital District (KCHD) is launching a proactive initiative to help residents detect and prevent colon cancer at its earliest stages. Recognizing that colon cancer often develops without noticeable symptoms, KCHD is expanding its efforts to offer a variety of accessible, noninvasive screening options and promote healthy lifestyle practices within the community.

Colorectal cancer remains one of the most common and deadly forms of cancer in the United States, with more than 53,000 deaths each year. Early detection significantly improves survival rates, but many people delay or avoid screening due to uncertainty about the process or concerns about discomfort. KCHD aims to address these barriers by making screenings more accessible and educating the community on the importance of prevention.

"Regular screening is a cornerstone of preventing advanced colon cancer, and our district is proud to provide several alternatives that can be performed right here in our local clinics," said Cindy Guess-FNP, at the Knox City Clinic, a service of Knox County Hospital District. "We encourage every eligible resident to speak with their primary healthcare provider about the best screening option for their unique risk profile. Early detection can truly save lives."

Why Early Detection Matters

Colon cancer typically begins as a polyp, which is an abnormal growth in the lining of the colon or rectum. While most polyps are benign, certain types can develop into cancer over time. Because colon cancer often grows slowly and silently, regular screenings are critical to catching it early before it becomes more difficult to treat.

"One of the biggest challenges with colon cancer is that it frequently presents no symptoms until it reaches an advanced stage," explained Guess. "That's why routine screenings, even when you feel healthy, are so important. Catching abnormal changes early can make a huge difference in treatment outcomes."

Individuals with an average risk of developing colon cancer are encouraged to begin regular screenings

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at age 45. However, those with a family history of colon cancer or a personal history of inflammatory bowel diseases, such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis, may need to start earlier. Lifestyle factors such as obesity, smoking, heavy alcohol consumption, and lack of physical activity also increase the risk of developing the disease.

Screening Options Available Locally

While KCHD does not perform colonoscopies on-site, the district offers several noninvasive screening options at both Knox City Clinic and Munday Clinic. These include:

- **Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT):** A simple, at-home test that detects hidden blood in stool samples, which can be an early sign of colon cancer. This test is recommended annually for those at average risk.
- **Stool DNA Test:** This test checks for specific DNA markers associated with colorectal cancer, in addition to detecting hidden blood. It is typically recommended every three years for those with no symptoms or significant risk factors.

Both tests are easy to use, minimally invasive, and highly effective at identifying early signs of cancer. If test results indicate a potential issue, patients can discuss the next steps with their primary care provider, including whether a colonoscopy may be appropriate for further evaluation.

"Even though we don't perform colonoscopies on-site, our goal is to provide our patients with guidance and support in selecting the right screening method for their health profile," said Guess. "If a colonoscopy is necessary, we'll help patients navigate the process and connect them with trusted specialists for further evaluation."

According to the National Cancer Institute, colonoscopies reduce deaths from colorectal cancer by more than 60%. However, Guess emphasized that noninvasive tests like the FIT and stool DNA test are highly effective first steps for those hesitant about undergoing a colonoscopy.

Prevention Through Lifestyle Changes

Beyond screenings, KCHD is committed to educating the community on how lifestyle changes can reduce the risk of colon cancer. Maintaining a diet rich in fiber, fruits, and vegetables while limiting red and processed meats can significantly reduce the likelihood of developing the disease.

"Nutrition plays a key role in colon health," Guess said. "A high-fiber diet helps regulate digestion and supports overall gut health. Pairing that with regular physical activity, not smoking, and moderating alcohol intake creates a strong foundation for long-term health."

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Other preventative steps include maintaining a healthy weight, managing chronic conditions like diabetes, and getting regular health checkups. “Colon cancer prevention is about more than just screenings—it’s about creating a lifestyle that supports overall digestive health,” Guess added.

Talking with Your Provider

Discussing family medical history with a primary care provider is an important step in evaluating personal risk factors and deciding on a screening schedule. A wellness exam provides a valuable opportunity to address any questions or concerns about colon cancer screening and prevention.

“Many people feel nervous about these conversations, but your healthcare provider is there to support you,” Guess said. “The more we know about your health history and lifestyle, the better we can recommend a screening plan that works for you.”

Make an Appointment Today

Knox County Hospital District encourages residents aged 45 and older, or those with increased risk factors, to schedule a screening. Early detection and prevention remain the most effective tools for reducing colon cancer mortality.

To schedule a screening or speak with a primary care provider about your risk factors, contact the Knox City Clinic at 940-657-3906 or Munday Clinic at 940-422-5271.

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.

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