



Press Release
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Prevention First: Building Healthier Habits to Lower Colon Cancer Risk

Knox County Hospital District Encourages Residents to Focus on Lifestyle, Family History and Personalized Screening Plans

KNOX CITY, Texas (February 25, 2026) — March is Colon Cancer Awareness Month, and Knox County Hospital District (KCHD) is encouraging residents to take a prevention-focused approach to colon health. While screening plays an important role, providers say that everyday choices — combined with a thoughtful review of family history — can significantly influence long-term risk.

“Preventive care starts with a conversation,” said Cindy Guess-FNP. “We want our community members to feel comfortable visiting with their provider about their health history, their concerns and the steps they can take now to protect their future.”

For many adults at average risk, colorectal cancer screening begins at age 45. However, patients with a close family history of colorectal cancer or polyps, certain inflammatory bowel conditions, or prior abnormal findings may need to begin earlier or be screened more often.

“Colon cancer prevention begins long before a test is ordered,” Guess said. “It starts with understanding your personal risk factors and making consistent lifestyle choices that support overall digestive health.”

Family history remains one of the most important risk indicators.

“If a parent, sibling or close relative has had colon cancer or advanced polyps, that information can change when we recommend screening and how frequently we monitor,” Guess said. “That’s why we encourage patients to gather as much family medical history as possible and share it during their wellness visit.”

Beyond age and genetics, research continues to show that lifestyle factors can influence colon cancer risk. Providers at Knox County Hospital District emphasize several practical steps that can help limit the possibility of developing the disease.

“A diet high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and fiber helps support healthy digestion,” Guess explained. “Fiber promotes regular bowel movements and supports a healthier colon environment. On the other hand, diets high in processed meats and heavily processed foods have been associated with increased risk.”

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Physical activity also plays a meaningful role.

“Regular exercise helps maintain a healthy weight and improves overall metabolic health,” Guess said. “Even moderate activity — such as brisk walking for 30 minutes most days of the week — can have protective benefits.”

Maintaining a healthy weight is another important factor. Obesity has been linked to a higher risk of several cancers, including colorectal cancer.

“When we talk about prevention, we’re really talking about long-term patterns,” Guess said. “Sustainable habits — moving more, eating balanced meals, limiting sugary beverages — can make a real difference over time.”

Providers also advise limiting alcohol consumption and avoiding tobacco use.

“Alcohol and tobacco both increase cancer risk,” Guess noted. “Reducing or eliminating those exposures is one of the most powerful steps someone can take for overall cancer prevention.”

Although Knox County Hospital District does not perform colonoscopies on site, local providers are actively involved in guiding patients through the screening process. When a colonoscopy is recommended, they coordinate referrals and help patients understand the purpose and benefits of the procedure.

“A colonoscopy allows physicians to examine the colon and remove polyps before they have a chance to become cancer,” Guess said. “It is both a screening and preventive tool. If that’s the right next step for a patient, we make sure they are informed and supported throughout the referral process.”

Other screening options may be appropriate depending on a patient’s risk level and medical history. During a routine wellness exam, providers review available methods and help determine which plan best fits clinical guidelines and the patient’s individual needs.

Screening is designed to detect concerns before symptoms appear, but residents are urged not to ignore warning signs such as persistent changes in bowel habits, rectal bleeding, unexplained weight loss, ongoing fatigue or abdominal discomfort.

“Symptoms should always be evaluated promptly,” Guess said. “But ideally, prevention means we are identifying issues before symptoms ever develop.”

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Guess said the KCHD goal is to make prevention approachable and practical.

“We want our community to know that they don’t have to navigate this alone,” Guess said. “Our providers are here to listen, assess risk and help each patient create a plan that fits their health history and their life.”

Colon Cancer Awareness Month serves as an annual reminder, but providers emphasize that prevention should be a year-round commitment.

“Start with one step,” Guess said. “Schedule a wellness exam. Review your family history. Talk about your lifestyle. Small, consistent choices — combined with appropriate screening — can significantly reduce risk and protect your long-term health.”

To schedule a wellness exam or discuss colon cancer screening, call the Knox City Clinic at 940-657-3906 or the Munday Clinic at 940-422-5271. Taking action today can help safeguard your health for years to come.

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.