

March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month – Of cancers that affect both men and women, colorectal cancer is the second leading cancer killer in the United States. It affects men and women of all racial and ethnic groups, and is most often found in people aged 50 years or older. And the risk of developing colorectal cancer increases with age. Screening tests can find precancerous polyps, so that they can be removed before they turn into cancer. Screening tests also can find colorectal cancer early, when treatment works best. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) reminds health care professionals that Medicare provides coverage of certain colorectal cancer screenings for the early detection of colorectal cancer.

Medicare Coverage:

Medicare defines high risk of developing colorectal cancer as someone who has one or more of the following risk factors: close relative (sibling, parent, or child) who has had colorectal cancer or an adenomatous polyp, family history of familial adenomatous polyposis, family history of hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer, personal history of adenomatous polyps, personal history of colorectal cancer, or personal history of inflammatory bowel disease, including Crohn's Disease and ulcerative colitis.

All Medicare beneficiaries age 50 and older who are not at high risk for colorectal cancer are covered for the following screening services:

- Fecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT) every year,
- Flexible Sigmoidoscopy once every 4 years (unless a screening colonoscopy has been performed and then Medicare may cover a screening sigmoidoscopy after at least 119 months) ,
- Screening Colonoscopy every 10 years (unless a screening flexible sigmoidoscopy has been performed and then Medicare may cover a screening colonoscopy only after at least 47 months), and
- Barium Enema (as an alternative to a covered screening flexible sigmoidoscopy).

All Medicare beneficiaries age 50 and older who are at high risk for colorectal cancer are covered for the following screening services:

- FOBT every year,
- Flexible Sigmoidoscopy once every 4 years,
- Screening Colonoscopy every 2 years (unless a screening flexible sigmoidoscopy has performed and then Medicare may cover a screening colonoscopy only after at least 47 months), and
- Barium Enema (as an alternative to a covered screening colonoscopy).

What Can You Do?

CMS needs your help to promote early detection and prevention of colorectal cancer. As a provider of health care services to seniors and other people with Medicare you can help increase awareness and educate your patients about their risk factors, what they can do to reduce their risk, and encourage prevention and early detection through colorectal cancer screening, as appropriate. Your recommendation can help save lives! Colorectal cancer is preventable, treatable, and beatable.

For More Information:

- Cancer Screenings Brochure – This tri-fold brochure provides health care professionals with an overview of Medicare-covered cancer screenings, including colorectal cancer screening. http://www.cms.gov/MLNProducts/downloads/Cancer_Screening.pdf
- Quick Reference Information: Medicare Preventive Services – This double-sided chart contains coverage, coding, and payment information for the many Medicare-covered preventive services,

including colorectal cancer screening.

http://www.cms.gov/MLNProducts/downloads/MPS_QuickReferenceChart_1.pdf

- The Guide to Medicare Preventive Services for Physicians, Providers, Suppliers and Other Health Care Professionals – This comprehensive resource contains coverage, coding, and payment information for the many Medicare-covered preventive services, including colorectal cancer screening.

http://www.cms.gov/MLNProducts/downloads/mps_guide_web-061305.pdf

- The National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable <http://nccrt.org/>
- National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month (NCCAM) – Visit the Prevent Cancer Foundation website at <http://www.preventcancer.org/colorectal> for more information on NCCAM.

Thank you!