



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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#### Seek testing for colorectal cancer

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health wants to remind the public that colorectal cancer is almost 100 percent preventable just by getting tested. The American Cancer Society estimates that 145,290 new cases of colorectal cancer will be diagnosed in the United States and an estimated 56,290 people will die from this disease in 2005. In 2004, the American Cancer Society estimated that 2,330 new cases of colorectal cancer would be diagnosed in Alabama, and 900 deaths would be attributable to colorectal cancer.

Colorectal cancer, the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the nation, is a cancer that develops in the colon or rectum of both men and women. Before a cancer develops, there often are earlier changes in the lining of the colon or rectum, such as polyps. Early polyp removal, which can be done through a flexible sigmoidoscopy and colonoscopy, may prevent cancer from developing.

All men and women are at risk of developing colorectal cancer; however, a vast majority of cases are diagnosed after the age of 50. In addition to aging, additional factors that increase an individual's risk of developing colorectal cancer include a personal family history of colon cancer, a personal history of intestinal polyps, obesity, increased consumption of red meat and alcohol, smoking, and lack of physical activity.

When colorectal cancer is detected and treated early, there is over a 90 percent survival rate, but only 39 percent of colon cancers are found at an early stage because of lack of screening.

The American Cancer Society recommends that beginning at age 50 both men and women follow one of the these testing schedules for colorectal cancer:

- Flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years
- Yearly fecal occult blood test and flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years (This combination is preferred over either fecal occult blood test alone, or flexible sigmoidoscopy alone.)
- Double-contrast barium enema every five years
- Colonoscopy every 10 years

People who are at an increased risk for colorectal cancer are encouraged to talk with their health care provider about a different testing schedule. A physician may recommend that an individual start a screening method earlier.

For more information on colorectal cancer please contact:

The American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345 or [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

The National Cancer Institute at 1-800-4-CANCER or [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

3/3/05