



News Release

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No Excuses: If You are 50 or Over, Get Screened for Colon Cancer

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) and Utah Cancer Action Network (UCAN) want Utahns ages 50 and older know there is “No excuse” for not getting screened for colorectal cancer. The disease is the second leading cause of cancer death in Utah and nation. Although there is a 90 percent cure rate when detected early, studies show fewer than half of Americans get a preventive screening test.

The UDOH reports the risk of developing colorectal cancer increases with age, in Utah 89 percent of cases occur in people age 50 and older. Common excuses for not getting screened include:

***The excuse:** No one in my family has had it.*

The reality: Having a family history of colon cancer or a personal history of inflammatory bowel disease may increase a person’s risk for colon cancer. However, three in four people diagnosed with colon cancer had no relatives with the disease.

Erin Day had a family history and so had a colonoscopy at age 41. The life-saving procedure detected a malignant tumor. Day endured surgery and six months of chemotherapy, and is grateful she was screened and survived the disease.

“It’s easy to make excuses, like not having a family history, being embarrassed, or not having enough time,” said Day. “But the test isn’t painful and doesn’t take as long as you think it will, especially when compared to the treatment for colon cancer.”

***The excuse:** Colorectal cancer screening is painful.*

The reality: There are many screening tests for colon cancer. The fecal occult blood test is painless. And while colonoscopy may be uncomfortable, it is seldom painful.

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The excuse: I don't have symptoms.

The reality: Early colorectal cancer usually presents no symptoms at all, which is why it's so important for everyone 50 and over to have regular screenings. Choosing not to be screened and using the excuse, "But I'm fine, I don't have any symptoms," can be a deadly choice. Often, colon cancer can be prevented. Regular screening tests can find precancerous polyps so they can be removed before they turn into cancer.

Colorectal surgeon Joe Eyring, MD warns that waiting for symptoms is dangerous. "Often there are no early warning signs of colon cancer," says Eyring. "In fact, most people don't show symptoms until the disease is more advanced and more deadly."

The excuse: Colorectal cancer is a man's disease.

The reality: Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer in both men and women. Some women believe they are not at risk for the disease, but that is just a myth.

The excuse: I can't afford it.

The reality: There are several options for colorectal cancer screening. Some are more expensive than others and most are covered by insurance. UCAN offers free fecal occult blood test (FOBT) kits.

March is National Colon Cancer Awareness Month. The American Cancer Society estimates 240 Utahns will die from colorectal cancer and 750 will battle the illness this year. Colorectal cancer screening is effective in two ways: first, it detects and removes precancerous growths, called polyps, before they become cancer; second, it finds cancer early when treatment is more effective. For more information visit www.ucan.cc or call 1-888-222-2542.

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