

Health Awareness

A County Health Pool Publication



March 2004

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month



Preventable, Treatable and Beatable!

That is the mantra of the Cancer Research and Prevention Foundation. This slogan was designed for a disease that is the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States. Colorectal cancer (CRC) surpasses both breast and prostate cancer in mortality, and is second only to lung cancer in numbers of cancer deaths. CRC may also be even more fatal because so many potential victims are embarrassed to discuss it with their families or physicians until it is too late.

CRC is highly preventable, but in 2003 an estimated 147,500 new cases were diagnosed of which 57,100 people will die from it. The death rate is even higher among Hispanics because few people in that population get screened.

What can you do to avoid contracting colorectal cancer and to minimize its effects if you are diagnosed with it?

Get Screened

CRC begins with non-cancerous polyps, grape-like growths in the lining of the colon and rectum. These polyps can become cancerous. Because there are often no symptoms related to polyps, it is important to be screened.

Approximately 90 percent of colorectal cancers and deaths are thought to be preventable. Your need to be tested becomes greater as you get older or if you have a family history of CRC.

Tests include hemocults, fecal occult blood tests and colonoscopies. Your CHP Plan Document describes your coverage for these tests. Call Anthem Customer Service at 1-866-698-0087 if you have any questions about your coverage.

Exercise Regularly

Moderate exercise is always good for your health. According to scientists and doctors, exercise can also help prevent CRC. A 1997 study at the Harvard School of Public Health found that regular moderate exercise, such as a daily hour-long walk, reduced the risk of developing colon cancer by almost 50 percent.

The study, which consisted of female registered nurses, also found that overweight women were almost twice as likely to develop colon cancer. While more study is needed, it is clear that exercise and weight

play a large role in the prevention of colon cancer.

Eat Right

Leafy green vegetables produce a compound called folate, which scientists believe may help stabilize DNA, possibly preventing cell mutations. While studies are still incomplete, a folate-rich diet is healthful. Calcium is also an important nutrient that may help prevent the development of growths in the colon.

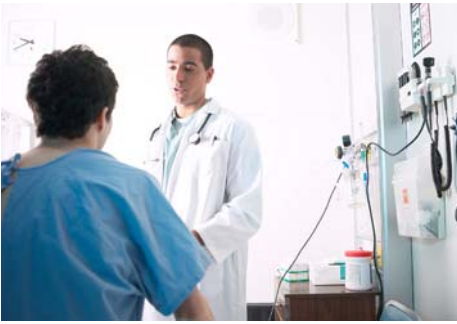
As a rule, a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, whole grains from breads and cereals, nuts and beans is good for your health and can help prevent CRC and other diseases.

Did You Know?

Did you know that tobacco use may significantly increase your risk of developing CRC and other cancers? The bottom line is...if you don't smoke, don't start. If you do, quit to lower your overall risk.

Did you know that excessive use of alcohol may increase your risk for CRC and other gastrointestinal cancers? So if you drink, do so only in moderation.

To find out more about colorectal cancer and what you can do to *prevent, treat and beat* it, contact the Cancer Research and Prevention Foundation at 1-800-227-4412 or visit their website at www.preventcancer.org.



What is an FOBT?

The Basics

A Fecal Occult Blood Test or FOBT is a test to see if there is blood in your bowel movements (stool).

Many things can cause blood in your stool, including colorectal cancer.

The FOBT can also let your health care professional know that there may be bleeding in your colon or rectum. Bleeding may come from polyps (growths on the lining of your colon or rectum).

You can perform a FOBT yourself at home with a kit that you can get from your health care professional.

Before the Test

Seven days before you take the FOBT, you will need to tell your health care professional what medications you take. You may have to stop taking these medications on the days that you are taking the test. Some medications, such as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, pain

relievers and blood thinners, and even some vitamins, can change the results of the test.

Three days before the test, your health care professional will ask you not to eat certain foods such as red or rare meat, cantaloupe, radishes, horseradish, raw beets, turnips, broccoli, cauliflower and parsnips. You will not be able to eat these foods until you have finished the test.

How to get a new CHP health card

If you lose or damage your County Health Pool (CHP) medical or dental card, or if you need extra cards for students away at school, you can get replacement cards by calling the numbers listed below.

To replace your medical card, call 1-866-698-0087.

To replace your dental card, call 1-800-231-2583. The system will guide you through the automated process.

CHP health training is coming soon to your location

A CHP representative may be coming to your location in the next few months to answer questions about your new health plan and CHP's affiliation with Anthem.

Throughout the year, CHP's representatives Meredith Burcham and John Britton will be coming to a site near you to offer training on a variety of health care topics and to help you get the most from your plans.

Topics may include: understanding your plan; the cost of health care;

and other general topics related to the health care industry.

We would like to address topics that are important to you and your employees. Please contact Meredith or John with your suggestions.

We are in the process of setting up training schedules for 2004. To find out when your next training session will be, check the calendar on the ctsi.org website around the first of March.