

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States, second only to lung cancer. Nebraska ranks among the top in the nation for its high incidence and death rate from colorectal cancer. Hundreds of Nebraskans die every year from this cancer. However, colon cancer is preventable, treatable, and beatable!

Colorectal cancer screening saves lives – an estimated 60% of colorectal cancer deaths could be prevented if men and women age 50 and older were screened routinely. March is Colon Cancer Awareness Month and the Panhandle Public Health District is working with partners in the Panhandle Cancer Coalition and the Nebraska Colon Cancer Screening Program to increase awareness and make sure more individuals are screened by offering FREE fecal occult blood test (FOBT) kits.

“An FOBT kit is simple, free and it’s an important step in preventing cancer,” explained Becky Corman, coordinator of the Panhandle Cancer Coalition.

Corman said as soon as you turn 50, you should get screened at regular intervals. “You may need to be tested earlier or more often than other people if you or a close relative have had colorectal polyps or colorectal cancer, or if you have inflammatory bowel disease,” she added. Other risk factors and symptoms are listed below.

Any Panhandle resident over 50 or those with concerns regarding colorectal cancer risk factors or symptoms can call 855-227-2217 for a free FOBT kit. The kit is simple and can be completed in the privacy of your own home. You will mail the kit into a laboratory and results will be mailed to you and your doctor. “If the FOBT kit indicates there is blood in the stool, a follow-up colonoscopy is recommended. We will assist with planning follow-up care if needed,” Corman added.

“Getting a screening test for colorectal cancer could save your life. If you are 50 or older or you or a relative have had colorectal polyps or cancer or have inflammatory bowel disease, get screened today,” she concluded.

For a FREE colon cancer screening kit contact Panhandle Public Health District at 1-855-227-2217. Free Screening Kits are also available at Nein Pharmacy and Sonny’s Pharmacy in Bridgeport, Shopko Pharmacy in Alliance, Stockmen’s Pharmacy in Gordon, Bemis Drug in Kimball, Campbell Drug in Oshkosh, and Western Drug in Sidney.

Possible symptoms of colon cancer

- Blood in or on the stool
- A change in bowel habits
- General, unexplained stomach discomfort
- Frequent gas pains or indigestion
- Unexplained weight loss
- Chronic fatigue

Risk factors

- Eating a low-fiber, high-fat diet
- Being overweight
- Smoking
- An inactive lifestyle
- Certain hereditary conditions, such as the tendency to have many colon polyps
- A family history of colon cancer, especially parents or siblings

For additional information about colon cancer, visit www.pphd.org. The purpose of the Panhandle Public Health District is to educate the region it serves about the prevention of epidemics, spread of contagious diseases, injury, illness and disability. The district is charged with promoting and encouraging healthy behaviors. They promote the quality and accessibility of health services and protection against environmental hazards. Through education, protection and promotion of these issues, the Panhandle Public Health District believes the quality of life of the residents they serve can be greatly improved.