

Questions & Sample Answers / ECHO-TV Show # & “Understanding Colon Cancer”

(Recording Show: Tuesday, February 24, 2009 / 2:00–8:00 pm @ TPT)

1. *What is cancer?* Why should people in my community be concerned about cancer?

Sample Answer

- *Cancer is a life-threatening disease that occurs when cells in a part of the body begin to grow out of control.*
- *Sometimes cancer cells break away from a tumor and spread to other parts of the body. They can settle in new places and form new tumors.*
- Remember, many cancers can be treated (cured) and many people survive cancer. But it is important to know more about this disease so we can protect our health.
- Back in (fill in the country), we didn't know much about cancer.
- Many people may have had cancer or died of cancer but we didn't talk about it. That doesn't mean we didn't get cancer.
- All of us are at risk for cancer.

2. What are the symptoms (warning signs) of colon cancer?

Sample Answer

- Some warning signs of colon cancer include blood in the stool, rectal bleeding or a change in bowel habits.

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- These are also warning signs for other, less serious illnesses.
- If you notice any of these signs talk with your doctor or health care provider.
- *Don't wait for warning signs to get tested.*

3. What are the risk factors for colon cancer? *Does cancer run in the family?*

Sample Answer

- The risk of colon cancer increases with age. *Everyone over 50 should be tested. If your records say you're not 50 yet, but your actual age is 50, urge your doctor to test you for colon cancer.*
- *Ten % of colon cancers run in the family, so your risk might be higher if you have had someone in your close family with colon cancer.*
- If you have inflammatory bowel disease it might also increase your risk.
- Being overweight, not getting enough exercise, having diabetes, abusing alcohol, and not getting regular tests for colon cancer increases your risk.

4. How can I reduce my risk?

Sample Answer

- You can reduce your risk by eating enough fresh fruits and vegetables, and eating less processed or smoked meat such as bologna, hot dogs, and sandwich meats.
- Eating less red meat, and animal fat (like lard) will also reduce your risk.
- Testing for colon cancer also reduces your risk.

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- But sometimes, these are not enough. Fortunately, colon cancer is a preventable disease. We have tests that help us prevent colon cancer.

5. If I am at risk, wouldn't my doctor or health care provider tell me to get tested?

Sample Answer

- As you get older, you have more health concerns. Your doctor has a lot to talk to you about.
- If your doctor does not mention getting tested for colon cancer, don't be afraid to ask about it.
- There is more than one way to get tested, so you and your doctor should choose the test that is best for you.

6. I feel fine, why should I get tested?

Sample Answer

- *You can have cancer and not know it.*
- Colon cancer rarely causes symptoms until later on, after it has grown and spread.
- *Detecting and treating cancer early greatly improves the possibility of curing it.*
- So, testing is important because it can help prevent or find colon cancer before it becomes a problem.

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7. Are colon cancer exams painful?

Sample Answer

- No, colon cancers exams that are done in your doctor’s office are not painful.
- For the most part, patients are given medicine to sleep through the exams, so they won't feel anything.

8. This is a rather personal test. Will I be in a private room?

Sample Answer

- Most of these tests are done in a private room where no other patients are around.
- Doctors and health care providers are professional and very careful to respect your privacy.
- If at any time you feel your privacy is not being respected, let the doctor or health care provider know.

9. How will I feel afterward? Will I need someone to drive me home?

Sample Answer

- Most people feel OK after a colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy. You may feel some discomfort, a bit sleepy or tired.
- Your doctor or health care provider will watch how you are doing and give plenty of fluids after these tests; especially after your wake up from sleep.
- Because you may feel sleepy and tired after these tests, bring a relative or friend with you who can take you home.

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10. When will I get my results? What if I have cancer?

Sample Answer

- *Results are typically available within a week of being tested.*
- *If you test positive for cancer, your doctor will discuss recommendations for treatment with you.*
- *Treatment will depend on the type and severity of the cancer.*
- *While cancer is a serious disease, many cancers can be treated, and patients can go on to live healthy lives.*

11. Where/how can I find more about colon cancer?

Sample Answer:

- Asking about colon cancer testing isn't always easy. The American Cancer Society can help.
- Call the American Cancer Society anytime, day or night, at 1-800-227-2345.
- We can tell you more about the tests, help you talk to your doctor, or just listen to your concerns.

12. Is there anything else you'd like to add?