

Sample Press Release

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RISE IN SCREENING MARKS COLON CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

More than 70 percent of eligible Kentuckians are following colon cancer screening guidelines -- lifting the state to a ranking of 17th, up from 49th in 1999, according to the state Department of Public Health. Colon cancer is the second greatest cause of cancer deaths in Kentucky, after lung cancer.

Screening can find precancerous polyps—abnormal growths in the colon or rectum—so they can be removed before turning into cancer. Screening also helps find colorectal cancer at an early stage, when treatment often leads to a cure.

The improvement in Kentucky's screening rates is being celebrated during March, which was first designated as Colon Cancer Awareness Month in 2000. Since then, partners throughout the state have promoted screening through events and educational outreach to health professionals and the public. In particular, KCP promotes "Dress in Blue Day," which encourages people to wear blue to raise awareness of colon cancer. This year "Dress in Blue Day" is March 1.

"Kentucky's improved screening rate is due to hard work on the part of many organizations and individuals," said Connie Sorrell, director of the Kentucky Cancer Program at University of Louisville. "But we must redouble our efforts in order to screen the remaining 30 percent, who are more often than not the uninsured or under-insured."

According to American Cancer Society estimates, Kentucky will have 2,370 new cases of colon cancer this year, and 830 people will die from the disease. Health officials recommend colon cancer screening, between ages 45 and 75, with those older than 75 advised to discuss screening with their doctor. Several different screening tests can be used to find polyps or colorectal cancer. Patients are advised to talk their doctor about which test is best for them, based on their age and risk factors.