

**GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **MARCH IS COLORECTAL CANCER SCREENING AWARENESS MONTH**

### ***Learn More About Colorectal Cancer and Get Connected to Free and Affordable Screenings***

(White Plains) – The Westchester County Department of Health is partnering with hospitals and health systems Countywide to raise awareness about how to identify and reduce the risks of colorectal cancer, and to encourage residents age 45 and older to schedule a colorectal cancer screening.

Health Commissioner Sherlita Amler, MD, said: “Colorectal cancer is the third most common of all cancers, and during the past decade, the incidence of colorectal cancer has been increasing in people under age 50. That’s why the recommended age to start screening was lowered to 45 in 2021. If you are in your forties, this is the right time to talk with your doctor about your family history, identify your risk factors and learn how lifestyle changes can reduce your risks.”

More than half of all colorectal cancers are linked to physical inactivity, poor nutrition, excess body weight, and tobacco and alcohol use. Maintain a healthy weight, exercise regularly and eat more vegetables, fruits and whole grains. Avoid tobacco and limit or avoid red and processed meats, sugary drinks, refined grains and alcohol.

Dr. Christine Molmenti, Associate Professor and Cancer Epidemiologist within the Department of Occupational Medicine, Epidemiology and Prevention, Northwell Health Cancer Institute said: “There are different types of colorectal cancer screening tests that are effective. A colonoscopy, where precancerous polyps are detected and removed, is the only screening test that both prevents cancer and detects cancer early. With the increasing number of younger patients developing colorectal cancer, it is important to be aware that age 45 is the recommended start date for colonoscopy. If there is a family history of colorectal cancer or an advanced polyp, it is best to arrange for a screening colonoscopy even earlier.”

Racial and ethnic background also is a factor. Blacks have the second-highest rates of colorectal cancer and are most likely to be diagnosed later. Ashkenazi Jews have one of the highest colorectal cancer risks of any ethnic group in the world, according to the American Cancer Society. Other risk factors include a family history of colorectal cancer or polyps, which are small clumps of cells that adhere to the colon, ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease, Type 2 diabetes and inherited gene changes.

Some screening tests can be done at home, are low-cost and require no prep or sedation, but must be performed every one to three years and may require a follow up colonoscopy. A colonoscopy can be performed every 10 years for those with no risk factors, but requires preparation and sedation in a medical office or health center.

Residents who are uninsured or underinsured can call the Cancer Services Program of the Hudson Valley at 855-277-4482 for information, and referral to free cancer screenings (colorectal, breast and cervical) and diagnostic testing at health centers throughout the County.

To learn more, attend one of these cancer screening education sessions:

- Friday, March 8, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Colorectal Cancer Screening Program at Montefiore Einstein Mount Vernon Hospital Atrium, 12 North 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Mount Vernon: New and existing patients can walk through the Rollin' Colon, a 20-foot-long, 12-foot-high, 10-foot-wide pink inflatable reproduction of the human colon to learn more about the signs and symptoms colorectal cancer, the types of screening available and obtain resources and literature. Those approved will be scheduled for a colonoscopy.
- Wednesday, March 13, 6 to 7:30 p.m. at Ossining Open Door, 165 Main St. 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Ossining. New and existing patients can learn more about colorectal cancer screening, and whether they are eligible for free screenings. Refreshments will be served and transportation will be reimbursed. To register, call 914-502-1301 or email [events@odfmc.org](mailto:events@odfmc.org)
- Wednesday, March 13, 5:30 to 7 p.m. "45 is the New 50: The Importance of Screening and Early Detection of Colorectal Cancer" at Cancer Support Community Greater NY & CT (formerly Gilda's Club), 80 Maple Ave., White Plains. A light dinner will be served, followed by a bilingual education session. Referrals for free colorectal cancer screenings for uninsured or underinsured participants will be provided by White Plains Hospital. To register, visit [Cancer Support Community Greater NY & CT at Gilda's Club - \(gnosishosting.net\)](http://CancerSupportCommunityGreaterNY&CTatGilda'sClub-(gnosishosting.net)) or call 914 644-8844 x103.
- Thursday, March 21, 5:30 to 7 p.m. "45 is the New 50: The Importance of Screening and Early Detection of Colorectal Cancer" at the Yonkers Riverfront Library, 1 Larkin Center, Yonkers. A light dinner will be served, followed by a bilingual education session. Referrals for free colorectal cancer screenings for uninsured or underinsured participants will be provided by White Plains Hospital and health insurance navigation will be provided by Westchester Community Health Center. To register, visit [Cancer Support Community Greater NY & CT at Gilda's Club - \(gnosishosting.net\)](http://CancerSupportCommunityGreaterNY&CTatGilda'sClub-(gnosishosting.net)) or call 914 644-8844 x103.
- Thursday, March 21, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Early Onset Colorectal Cancer Symposium at Phelps Hospital Auditorium, 701 North Broadway, Sleepy Hollow. Presented for healthcare providers by the Northwell Health Cancer Institute in collaboration with the Katz Institute for Women's Health, Phelps Hospital and Northern Westchester Hospital, To register, go to <https://Colorectalsymposium.eventbrite.com>.

For more health tips and cancer resources, go to [www.westchestergov.com/health](http://www.westchestergov.com/health). The health department can be reached at (914) 813-5000.

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