

ABIPA – ASHEVILLE BUNCOMBE INSTITUTE OF PARITY ACHIEVEMENT

Colorectal Cancer Concerns

By JéWana Grier-McEachin, Executive Director

The single most important thing you can do to reduce your risk for colorectal cancer is to get screened.

Despite an overall decline in colorectal cancer cases and deaths over the past several decades, Black men and women are still more likely to get the disease, and more likely to die from it, than people in any other racial group.

“The relationship between race and colorectal cancer is complex,” says George Chang, M.D. “But we do know that the differences in incidence and survival are mostly due to disparities in access to health care and the age of diagnosis.”

Colonoscopy screening exams detect cancer early, when treatment is most effective. They also can prevent colorectal cancer. Unfortunately, Black men and women get screened for cancer at lower rates than other groups.

Dr. Chang highlighted a promising practice that the state of Delaware implemented. The state paid for screenings for low-income patients, assigned patients a nurse navigator to help them manage their care, and worked with churches to raise awareness about the benefits of screening. The state also covered the cost of treatment for uninsured patients with colorectal cancer.

Low-Cost Colorectal Cancer Screening Options Are Available

If cost or discomfort are stopping you from getting a colonoscopy, there are alternatives. Stool-based tests can detect markers, or clues, that might indicate cancer. Keep in mind that if a stool-based test shows signs of cancer, your doctor will likely recommend you get a colonoscopy.

No matter which test you choose, you should begin regular colorectal cancer screening at age 45. If you are at the recommended age for colonoscopy and you are insured, your insurance will cover all or most of the cost of the test.

Younger Age Means Later Stage

Colorectal cancer is on the rise in people under 35. This is especially true in the Black population. Young people often aren't thinking about cancer, so they may be more likely to ignore symptoms.

For younger people, a family history of cancer can be a valuable clue that they should be concerned about their



JéWana Grier-McEachin. Photo: Pro16 Productions



colorectal cancer risk. To determine if you have a family history of colorectal cancer, trace out three generations of your family cancer history, if possible.

Find out who had cancer, how you are related, what type or types of cancer they had, and what age each person was diagnosed. Focus on first- and second-degree relatives. First-degree relatives are parents, siblings, and children. Second-degree relatives are aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces, and grandparents.

Pay Attention to Colorectal Cancer Symptoms

No matter your age, be familiar with your body and your bowel habits, and see a doctor if colorectal cancer symptoms appear. Talk to your doctor

if symptoms last more than two weeks. Symptoms of colorectal cancer include blood in the stool, changes in stool frequency, narrow stools, frequent abdominal pain that doesn't go away, unintentional weight loss, or unexplained loss of appetite.

Healthy Choices Can Reduce Colorectal Cancer Risk

In addition to getting screened and learning your family history, there are healthy choices that can help reduce your risk for colorectal and other chronic diseases. These include:

- Don't smoke or use tobacco products
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Eat a plant-based diet
- Be physically active
- Limit red meat
- Avoid processed meat
- Limit alcohol

According to Dr. Chang, “Research shows that diets that are heavy in processed foods and low in fresh fruits and vegetables increase cancer risk.” It could sound simple but, “We know that fresh fruits and vegetables are good. We know that too much red meat is not good.”

While colorectal cancer is more common among Black men and women, knowing your family history, making healthy choices, and getting screened can help you take control and reduce your risk.

Source: www.mdanderson.org/cancerwise



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Kelly White, MHE, MPH. Photo: Pro16 Productions

Beyond the Table

by Kelly White, MHE, MPH,
ABIPA Health Education Program Manager

It's National Nutrition Month, where we put a focus on nutrition “Beyond the Table.”

To put it simply, we want to think about eating more from the garden, about how our food is processed and stored, about sustainability, and lastly, creating healthy habits.

How does one decide what is the most important thing to do when your dietician gives you a bunch of information you may not know what to do with? One way to do it would be to break it down into smaller messages and find ways that you can make small changes without having to change your entire life around.

Over the next four weeks, follow some of the tips listed here. Challenge yourself to make different decisions around food and lifestyle changes that will aid in creating a healthier you.

Week One: Learn to cook and how to plan healthier meals, use a grocery list to shop, and learn about food resources within your community.

Week Two: Check in with your health-care provider to see if there is a registered dietician on site. Work with them to come up with a plan that can assist you in meeting your health goals.

Week Three: Eat a variety of foods from all of the food groups and begin experimenting with recipes that use ingredients you aren't as familiar with. Shaniqua Simuel, the operator of Change Your Palate, challenges you to try a variety of foods without giving up the soulful flavors that make everything taste so good.

Week Four: Eat with the environment in mind. Think about ways you can incorporate more plant-based food into your diet. Get food from the local farmers market, grow food at home, or get food from a community garden, like the one in the Shiloh community, if you are able.

The overall idea is to find unique ways to create a healthier you, both now and in the future.

Source: eatright.org

ABIPA Announcements



Black Family Wellness Expo

Saturday, March 16

A FREE, fun, and educational event

for both kids and adults takes place from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Linwood Crump Shiloh Center, 121 Shiloh Road in Asheville.

Come and have your health and wellness questions answered, and enter to win a free, onsite, hot Team Us plate.

The event will feature informational booths, a kids zone, adult activities, and a Poster Art contest gallery. Winners of the poster art competition will be awarded at 1 p.m.

Women's Health Awareness Conference

Saturday, April 13

FREE health screenings, health education sessions, healthy living sessions, and health resources. What you learn could save your life!

Activities take place from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. at Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC), 121 Hendersonville Road in Asheville.

Registration is free. Register at www.niehs.nih.gov/womenshealthawareness. Early registration ends Friday, March 15, 2024. On-site registration will be available on the day of event.



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ABIPA promotes economic, social, and healthy parity achievement for African Americans and other underserved populations in Buncombe County through advocacy, education, research, and community partnerships.