

SCREENING AND EARLY DETECTION SAVES LIVES

Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer and second most deadly cancer in Canada.

However, if caught early, colorectal cancer is highly treatable and is up to 90 percent preventable through timely and thorough testing and screening.

"More than 9,000 Canadians a year die from colorectal cancer, so it's a big problem," says Dr. Malcolm Moore, Head of Medical Oncology and Hematology at Princess Margaret Cancer Centre in Toronto. "The good news is that the death rate is falling by about two percent a year, so hopefully by 2020 colon cancer will no longer be the second leading cause of cancer deaths."

It is important to speak with your family physician to find out more about getting tested or screened. For many Canadians, the test could be as simple as an at-home stool sample test. For those with a family history of colon cancer, or who are over 50, it may be more appropriate to undergo a colonoscopy for screening.

"It's not exactly popular conversation to talk about the colon, but I do think it's changing," says colorectal surgeon Dr. Zane Cohen, the Director of the Zane Cohen Centre for Digestive Diseases at Toronto's Mount Sinai Hospital. "There's been a heavy push on awareness, and I think it's much less of a stigma now to talk about colorectal cancer, bowel movements and stool patterns."

Higher-risk groups

Although no one cause leads to colorectal cancer, some people are at higher risk for developing the disease. If you fall into any one of the following groups, talk to your doctor about being screened as soon as possible:

- You have a family history of colon cancer. (If you have a first-degree relative; parent, sibling, aunt,

COLORECTAL CANCER IN CANADA



- Colorectal cancer is the **THIRD MOST COMMONLY** diagnosed type of cancer



- It is estimated that **24,000 CANADIANS** will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer in 2014



- Colorectal cancer is the **SECOND MOST DEADLY CANCER**



- An estimated **9,300 CANADIANS WILL DIE** from colorectal cancer this year



- 90% OF CASES** are preventable if detected early

Source: http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cd-mc/cancer/colorectal_cancer-cancer_colorectal-eng.php

uncle, grandparent, with a history of colon cancer, aim to get tested 10 years before their age of diagnosis)

- You have been diagnosed with polyps or early stage colon cancer
- You have inflammatory bowel disease (ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease)
- You have a family history of inherited breast cancer, uterine or ovarian cancer
- You are age 50+

"There is no doubt that population-based screening and early detection have cut the death rate,"

says Moore. "Everybody is at the same sort of risk for getting colon cancer, so we all need to be aware of it and we all need to be appropriately screened. If there's one message, it is that once you reach 50, you need to be screened."

Warning signs

Here are the signs and symptoms of colorectal cancer to look out for:

- Rectal bleeding or bright red or very dark blood in your stool
- A persistent change in normal bowel habits such as diarrhea, con-

stipation or both

- Frequent or constant cramps that last for more than a few days
- Stools that are ribbon-like or narrower than usual
- General stomach discomfort (bloating, fullness and/or cramps)
- Frequent gas pains
- A strong need to move your bowels, but with little stool
- A feeling that your bowel does not empty completely
- Unexplained weight loss
- Constant fatigue

It is important to note that symp-

toms often do not occur until the later stages of colorectal disease.

Talk openly with your doctor, know the signs and symptoms of colon cancer and your risk category. When it makes sense to go for screening, do so - there is no health advantage to inaction.

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CFL legend battling to educate fans about colon cancer



Lui Passaglia
CANADIAN FOOTBALL LEAGUE
HALL OF FAME PLACEKICKER/
PUNTER FOR THE BC LIONS

Mediaplanet had a chance to catch up with Lui Passaglia, best known for his 25-year career with the BC Lions, who went public last year with his fight against colon cancer. He now dedicates time to helping increase awareness and encourage people to talk to their doctors about this prevalent, yet highly preventable, disease.

Mediaplanet What motivated you to speak about your experience with colon cancer?

Lui Passaglia After the initial shock of being diagnosed with colon cancer wore off, I focused on arming myself with as much information about the disease as possible. I soon realized that by simply starting the conversation, I might be able to help raise awareness and encourage people to talk to their doctor about the urgency of early screening.

This is a disease that I hadn't given much thought to a few years ago. I figure many men and women share my previous mindset and we need to shift that way of thinking.

MP How did you find out that you had this disease?

LP I was diagnosed with stage three colon cancer during a routine check-up with my doctor. Prior to my colonoscopy, I showed some of the typical symptoms for the disease - constipation, abdominal discomfort, blood

in my stool, but I hadn't done my research to know what I should be looking for.

There is a hereditary link to colon cancer, so this could have played a part. About ten years ago my dad was diagnosed with the early stages of colon cancer, in fact that was one reason I had my first colonoscopy at age 54. Luckily my dad is also alive and well.

MP Do you think being an athlete gave you an edge when fighting the disease?

LP As an athlete I developed the discipline to train and exercise even when I wasn't feeling my best. Once diagnosed with colon cancer, there were times when the disease pre-

vented me from pushing myself physically. I persevered and I'm now back to exercising as much as possible. I think this allows me to heal both mentally, as well as physically. I feel like I'm in control of my body when I stay active.

MP How is your life different now than before you were diagnosed?

LP I have learned to appreciate the important things in life more, especially my friends and family who have been there for me during the rocky road. I don't know what I would do without that support system, it helps to reassure me that I'm not fighting this battle alone.

In terms of physical side effects, I developed ongoing neuropathy in my hands and feet. Every three months I have a blood test to check my tumour marker. So far, I'm cancer free. I can do everything I could do prior to my diagnosis.

What helps me every day is to focus on the positives and keep telling myself that I'm going to beat this. We need to spread the word about the importance of early detection and screening. Colon cancer is 90 percent preventable if caught early. Everyone should speak to their doctor to ask when they should be screened.

KATHERINE O'BRIEN
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JOIN LUI TO HELP RAISE AWARENESS

Lui Passaglia and his team banded together to run/walk for colon cancer awareness, an essential step in the fight against colon cancer in Canada.

PHOTO: COLON CANCER CANADA



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