

## Compassionate Outreach Ministries Health Team Health Tip

### GET A COLONOSCOPY



Take the right steps and you can turn colon cancer into one of the most preventable malignancies. But those steps may not be what you think. For example, a diet rich in fiber was long considered a surefire way to help protect against the disease. But, a recent review found fiber offered no overall protective effect when all risk factors were taken into account. So, what should you do? Three words -- get a colonoscopy.

Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer found in men and women in the United States, according to the American Cancer Society. An estimated 104,950 new cases of colon cancer and 40,340 new cases of rectal cancer were diagnosed in 2005 in the United States. Combined, they will cause about 56,290 deaths.

A colonoscopy utilizes a tiny camera inside a slender tube that's inserted through the rectum. The procedure lets doctors look for early signs of cancer inside the entire large intestine, from the rectum all the way through the colon to the lower end of the small intestine.

Even better, if a polyp is found, doctors can insert instruments through the same tube that will allow them to cut the lesion away, eliminating the cancer threat on the spot.

It's not the world's most pleasant procedure, however. Preparing for a colonoscopy requires powerful laxatives and sometimes several days of liquid diet. The patient also must be sedated for the procedure, so he or she can lose a day or more between the preparation and the colonoscopy itself.

Doctors estimate that about 64 percent of Americans who should be getting screened with colonoscopy are not.

To learn more about colonoscopy, visit the [National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse](#).