

HMFC provides free healthcare and wellness education to uninsured people living in poverty.



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Heart Mountain Free Clinic, | P.O. Box 1316, Cody, WY 82414



DON'T MISS YOUR CHANCE FOR PREVENTION

BY CINDY GLASER RN, HEART MOUNTAIN FREE CLINIC

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, so I thought it appropriate to focus this article on such a significant topic. Colon cancer is the world's fourth most deadly cancer with almost 900,000 deaths annually. Several decades ago, the incidence of colon cancer was quite low. However, factors such as obesity, lack of physical exercise, and smoking have increased the risk of colorectal cancer in today's population. According to the American Cancer Society (2020), "colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of cancer-related deaths in men and in women, and the second most common cause of cancer deaths when men and women are combined. It's expected to cause about 53,200 deaths during 2020." (American Cancer Society, January 8, 2020)

With such high statistics, you don't have to go far to find a personal story about the impact of colorectal cancer. In the HMFC office, both staff members have a family story to tell. The HMFC nurse has elected to share her story for this edition:

My name is Cindy. I am the Heart Mountain Free Clinic nurse, and I was diagnosed with colon cancer when I was 42 years of age. Being both a nurse and a cancer survivor places me in an interesting position. What should the nurse tell you? What does the survivor want you to know?

The nurse says, point-blank, get screened! It is that simple. If you want to tell me that it's unpleasant and inconvenient, go right ahead. I hope that you would do me the courtesy of explaining how unpleasant and

inconvenient it is to be treated for colon cancer. You see colon cancer is considered 85% preventable. When a colonoscopy is performed and polyps are removed, you have prevented the possibility of that polyp developing into cancer.

My second grandson, Hudson, was born on the same day that I had my port placed. It was placed in preparation for chemotherapy treatment, which took place in conjunction with radiation therapy. I would rather have been with my daughter when her beautiful son arrived. The physical and emotional scars, not only for myself but for my family, are still a raw pain in my chest.

My treatments are complete. I have been cured. No survivor likes to use that word, because it feels like you are tempting fate. I am alive. My post-cancer body is not the same as my pre-cancer body. I am grateful, that in the grand scheme of life, I only have mild inconveniences. I wish I would have sought medical treatment earlier. I had some symptoms that could be interpreted as colon cancer symptoms, but at such a young age, they were easy to dismiss and assume they were related to something simple.

These are things that the survivor wants to tell you.

This humble woman, who is a wife, a mother, a grandmother, a daughter, and a nurse, appeals to you to get screened.

If you need assistance with funding for your screenings, have questions or concerns, please call HMFC, 307-272-1753. We can help assist with getting your screening.

Fast Facts from the Center for Disease Control (CDC)

If you are age 50 to 75 years old, you should get screened for colorectal cancer.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends screening beginning at age 50. Some groups recommend starting earlier, at age 45.

The vast majority of new cases of colorectal cancer (about 90%) occur in people who are 50 or older.

Millions of people in the United States are not getting screened as recommended. They are missing the chance to prevent colorectal cancer or find it early when treatment often leads to a cure.

If you think you may be at increased risk for colorectal cancer, learn your family health history and ask your doctor if you should begin screening before age 50.

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WE'RE HERE TO HELP,
BUT WE CAN'T DO
IT ALONE.

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