



Huntsville Memorial Hospital

an affiliate of
Memorial Hermann Healthcare System

For Immediate Release

**HMH WANTS TO TALK ABOUT IT
COLORECTAL CANCER AWARENESS MONTH:
NO ONE SHOULD DIE OF EMBARRASSMENT**

HUNTSVILLE (MARCH 13, 2008) – March is colorectal cancer awareness month, and Huntsville Memorial Hospital wants to encourage everyone to talk about the cancer no one wants to talk about at a panel discussion beginning at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 25 in the HMH conference rooms. Colorectal cancer is the third most common form of cancer but can be easily detected with regular checkups. Join others in the community to learn more about the risk factors associated with colorectal cancer. Hear from a cancer survivor and visit with doctors David Ficklen, Charles Monday and Maria Sosa to discuss risks and testing options. Please RSVP to 291-4599.

In 2008, nearly 150,000 new cases of colorectal cancer will be diagnosed with approximately 50,000 deaths resulting from the disease, according to the American Cancer Society. However, Nine out of 10 people whose colorectal cancer is found and treated at an early stage, before it has spread, live at least five years.

“In many cases, colorectal cancers develop very slowly over a period of years,” said Dr. Maria Sosa, a radiation oncologist with HMH. “More than 95 percent of these cancers begin as polyps or tissue that grows in the lining of the colon or rectum and then grow. An adenoma polyp can turn into cancer but removing it can prevent the cancer from forming. These polyps must be identified early, though.”

According to the American Cancer Society, risk factors include: **age** – risk increases significantly after age 50, **history** of polyps or bowel disease, **family history**, **race** – African Americans have the highest number of colorectal cancer cases and highest deaths in US, **diet** high in fat content, lack of **exercise**, **overweight**, **smoking**, **alcohol** and **diabetes**.

“Lowering risk factors and getting regular checkups lowers a person’s chance of getting colon cancer, but if cancer is found, there are many options for treatment including surgery, radiation or chemotherapy,” said Dr. Charles Monday, general surgeon.

The American Cancer Society recommends regular screening for those over the age of 50 and a healthy diet and exercise. To encourage regular screenings, Huntsville Memorial is giving away free 'colocare' screening kits at the March 25 discussion session. The kits contain a special tissue that is dropped into the toilet and detects blood in the stool. Similar to the Fecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT), this test is done for 3 consecutive days, and the results are shared with a primary care physician.

"I encourage everyone in the community, especially those over the age of 50, to attend this discussion," said Dr. David Ficklen, internal medicine physician. "Colorectal cancer is a serious disease that people don't want to discuss, but knowledge gives you the power to catch it and treat it early,"

Editor's Note:

For more information or to arrange interviews with Dr. Maria Sosa, Radiation Oncologist; Dr. David Ficklen, internal medicine; or Dr. Charles Monday, general surgery, please contact Karen Bilsing at (936) 291-4599.

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About Huntsville Memorial Hospital

Since 1927, Huntsville Memorial Hospital has provided benevolent and charitable health care services, setting the standard for quality, proficient health care for the residents of Walker County and the surrounding communities. At Huntsville Memorial, we have great people who are passionate about your health. We have outstanding physicians, motivated leadership, and compassionate staff. We are your friends and neighbors – dedicated to excellence in everything we do – right here at home.

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