**Colon cancer is the second most common cancer in Ontario**

*If caught early, nine out of 10 people with the disease can be cured*

**Date (CITY, ON) –** March is Colon Cancer Awareness Month and [REGIONAL CANCER PROGRAM], in partnership with Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario), is encouraging Ontarians between ages 50 to 74 to talk to their family doctor or nurse practitioner about getting checked for colon cancer.

Getting checked for colon cancer in Ontario got easier with the introduction of the fecal immunochemical test (FIT) in 2019. FIT is a free at-home screening test available across the province for eligible Ontarians through ColonCancerCheck, Ontario’s organized colon cancer screening program.

FIT is a safe and painless test that checks your stool (poop) for tiny amounts of blood, which could be caused by colon cancer or pre-cancerous polyps (abnormal growths on the lining of the colon or rectum that could turn into cancer over time). People with an abnormal FIT result should have a colonoscopy within eight weeks of their abnormal result.

***[Note to region – include local stats if relevant]***

[PLACEHOLDER FOR INFORMATION ON REGIONAL EVENTS PROMOTING SCREENING]

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Colon cancer is the second most common cause of cancer death in Ontario (it is the second most common cause of cancer death in men and the third most common cause of cancer death in women). Research shows that almost 70 percent of people who get colon cancer do not have a family history of the disease.

It is estimated that in 2019, approximately 9,100 people in Ontario (about 4,900 men and 4,200 women) were found to have colon cancer and about 3,150 people (1,650 men and 1,500 women) died of the disease.

“Colon cancer usually develops later in life – over 90 percent of the time in people over age 50,” said Dr. Catherine Dubé, Clinical Lead, ColonCancerCheck, Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario). “Many people do not realize that colon cancer can happen in anyone over 50, even if no one in their family has had the disease.”

The ColonCancerCheck program checks two different groups of people across Ontario for colon cancer: those at average risk and those at increased risk.

* ColonCancerCheck recommends that people who are at average risk and have no symptoms of colon cancer get checked with the FIT every two years.
  + Average risk is defined as people ages 50 to 74 with no first-degree relatives (i.e., parent, brother, sister or child) who have or have had colon cancer.
* ColonCancerCheck recommends that people who are at increased risk and have no symptoms get checked with a colonoscopy. Someone at increased risk should start getting checked at age 50, or 10 years earlier than the age their first-degree relative was diagnosed with colon cancer, whichever comes first.
  + Increased risk is defined as people with a family history of colon cancer that includes one or more first-degree relatives who have been diagnosed with this disease.

People ages 50 to 74 should talk to their family doctor or nurse practitioner about getting checked for colon cancer, including whether FIT is right for them. Anyone without a family doctor or nurse practitioner can call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-828-9213 or visit a mobile screening coach, where coaches are available ([cancercareontario.ca/en/find-cancer-services/mobile-screening](https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/find-cancer-services/mobile-screening)). People living in a First Nation community may visit a health centre or nursing station to discuss their eligibility for a FIT kit.

For eligible people, LifeLabs will mail a FIT kit to their Ontario mailing address of choice following a request from their family doctor or nurse practitioner (or through Telehealth Ontario). Once the test has been completed by the screening participant, the FIT can be mailed back to the lab or dropped off at a LifeLabs Patient Service Centre (<http://locations.lifelabs.com/>).

To learn more, visit [Regional website or https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/types-of-cancer/colorectal/screening].

[Placeholder for concluding remarks/spokesperson quote from Regional Cancer Programs]

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**For more information, please contact:**

**[Insert Regional contact information]**

*Version française disponible.*