

## ASK THE EXPERT:

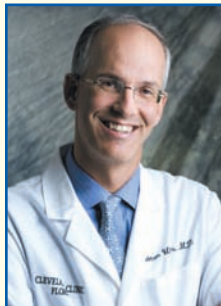
# MARCH IS COLON CANCER AWARENESS MONTH: ACT NOW TO PREVENT COLON CANCER

**Steven D. Wexner, M.D., FACS, FRCS, FRCS(ed), Cleveland Clinic Colorectal Surgeon**

Preventing colon cancer may be easier than you think. Most cases of colon cancer can be prevented by having a screening colonoscopy. Colon cancer is one of few diseases where normal body tissue—in this case, polyps—actually turns deadly. Removing nonmalignant polyps during a colonoscopy procedure prevents colon cancer from developing. Colon cancer is one of the most prevalent cancers in the US. It is also an equal opportunity destroyer, oblivious to gender, race or income. People at increased risk for colon cancer include those with one or more immediate relatives with the disease, an inherited tendency to form polyps, a long history of ulcerative colitis, or a history of breast or uterine cancer. However, they are in the minority. The disease occurs most often in those who least expect it.

According to Steven Wexner, MD, chief academic officer and chair of Colorectal Surgery at Cleveland Clinic Florida, “Colonoscopy is considered the gold standard test for detecting and eliminating polyps. Other tests are simply less effective.”

- Sigmoidoscopy: Only checks the lower portion of the colon.
- Hemocult test: Detects blood in the stool, but is often inaccurate, giving false negative reports to as many as 50% of patients with colon cancer and false positive reports to many patients who do not have the disease. A positive barium enema requires a colonoscopy follow-up.
- Virtual colonoscopy: Might be a substitute some day, but is now unaffordable. For this reason, it is now recommended by every major gastrointestinal society that both men and women have a screening colonoscopy at age 50. Anyone at increased risk should be screened by age 40—earlier in some



cases. The need for future screening tests is determined by the findings at the first screening as well as the patient's risk factors. Some symptoms of colon cancer include blood in the stool and pain in the lower abdomen. More than half of all people diagnosed with colon cancer have no symptoms at all, so it is simply not wise to wait for the appearance of symptoms. Do yourself a favor and schedule a colonoscopy today. It just might save your life.

Cleveland Clinic Florida's Digestive Disease team is comprised of colorectal surgeons, gastroenterologists, general surgeons and other specialists. They work collaboratively, in order to provide the most accurate diagnosis and individualized treatment plans for conditions such as colon cancer, irritable bowel syndrome, Crohn's and Colitis, liver and pancreatic cancers, as well as many others. This team effort allows for the best outcome in patient care.

*With locations in both Broward and Palm Beach, Cleveland Clinic Florida is a destination for healthcare. For a consultation, call 800-639-DOCTOR, or visit [www.clevelandclinicflorida.org](http://www.clevelandclinicflorida.org) for more information.*

*Patients at the Health and Wellness center have access to everything from preventive care to advanced diagnostics and treatments. The Cleveland Clinic Florida Health and Wellness Center is located at CityPlace Tower. The new facility has approximately 20 physicians on staff, including those rotating from its Weston campus. It offers more than 15 medical specialists including a variety of imaging and diagnostic services like CT scanning, digital mammography, MRI, ECHO, EKG and a full-service laboratory.*



**Cleveland Clinic**  
Florida