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**FREE COLORECTAL CANCER SCREENING KITS AVAILABLE
FROM HEALTH DEPARTMENT AT LOCAL EVENTS**

The Westchester County Health Department is making it easy to get tested for colorectal cancer by handing out free colorectal cancer home-screening kits for eligible residents at community events.

“Colorectal cancer claims many lives, but it can often be effectively treated if discovered early enough through routine screening,” said Westchester County Health Commissioner, Dr. Joshua Lipsman. “The kits we are providing allow you to do the screening yourself in the comfort of your own home. It is simple, painless and doesn’t require a trip to the doctor unless a problem is found.”

On **Saturday, April 21 at the Riverfront Library in Yonkers**, Health Department staff will be participating in a health forum sponsored by the American Cancer Society in collaboration with the Westchester County Colorectal Coalition. This Community Health Forum is intended for a Spanish-speaking audience and will focus on colorectal cancer, nutrition, and diabetes. Colorectal cancer home-screening kits will be provided free of charge for eligible residents.

At the Second Annual Community Health Awareness Forum for Women, which was held at the **Crowne Plaza Hotel in White Plains on Sunday, March 18**, the Health Department was onsite to provide colorectal cancer home-screening kits free of charge to uninsured residents and to those whose insurance does not cover colorectal screening. Information was also provided on simple, practical steps to greatly reduce the risk of colorectal, breast and cervical cancers. Approximately 50 women were reached at this event, which was sponsored by the American Cancer Society in collaboration with the Westchester County Colorectal Coalition and the American Muslim Woman’s Association.

As of April 1, 2007, clients who receive colorectal cancer screening through the Westchester County Healthy Living Partnership and are diagnosed with colon cancer will now be eligible to apply for Medicaid through the Medicaid Treatment Act. Clients diagnosed with colon cancer through the Healthy Living Partnership prior to April 1, 2007, who are still in treatment, are also eligible to apply for Medicaid through the Medicaid Treatment Act. This provision of the

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Medicaid Treatment Act will help reduce barriers to cancer treatment and management previously faced by such clients. Health Department staff have been trained to assist these clients in the process of enrolling in Medicaid.

Colorectal cancer, affecting the colon or rectum, is the second-leading cause of cancer-related death among men and the third-leading cause among women in Westchester. In New York State, more than 4,000 people die from colorectal cancer each year. It is estimated that nearly 90 percent of all colorectal cancer cases could be prevented by early detection and treatment through regular screening tests. Since the cancer generally begins from precancerous growths in the colon or rectum, cancer can often be prevented by discovering and removing those growths. Unfortunately, there are often no readily-apparent symptoms for colorectal cancer until it has reached a life-threatening stage. This is why routine colorectal cancer screening is crucial.

Since 93 percent of cases occur among individuals over 50, the Health Department strongly recommends that men and women 50 years of age and over speak with a health care provider about colorectal cancer screening options. The routine screenings currently recommended include one of the following options:

- a fecal occult blood test (FOBT) every year;
- a flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years, with an annual FOBT;
- or a colonoscopy every ten years.

Some people are at higher than normal risk of colorectal cancer and are advised to begin screening earlier than age 50. Factors which may put one at higher risk include:

- A family history or personal history of polyps or colorectal cancer
- Inflammatory bowel disease
- A low fiber, high fat diet low in fruits and vegetables
- Lack of physical activity
- Obesity
- Alcohol or tobacco use

The Westchester County Health Department is an active member of the Westchester County Colorectal Coalition and partners with the American Cancer Society and community organizations to promote life-saving cancer screening. The Health Department has provided free FOBT kits for home use to uninsured and underinsured residents who are at average risk for colorectal cancer since 1999. Free colonoscopies are also facilitated for residents at increased risk for colorectal cancer due to their medical histories.

For more information call the Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5000 or visit our website at www.westchestergov.com/health.