

ANDREW J. SPANO, Westchester County Executive
JOSHUA LIPSMAN, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner of Health
SUSAN TOLCHIN, Director of Communications

CONTACT: SUSAN TOLCHIN
MARY LANDRIGAN

(914) 285-2932
(914) 637-4715

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 28, 2001

NATIONAL COLON CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

March is National Colon Cancer Awareness Month and the Westchester County Department of Health is urging residents 50 years of age and older to get screened for colorectal cancer because 93% of all cases are diagnosed with in this age group.

“Both men and women are at risk for colorectal cancer,” said Joshua Lipsman, M.D., M.P.H., Westchester County Commissioner of Health. “Routine screening for colorectal cancer in persons aged 50 and over is extremely important because this disease often develops with few, if any, symptoms at first,” Dr. Lipsman continued. “The majority of colorectal cancers develop first as polyps, which are growths inside the colon or rectum that may become cancerous. Colorectal cancer can be prevented by detecting and removing any precancerous colorectal polyps that may be present in the colon for years before invasive cancer develops,” he added.

According to the American Cancer Society, an estimated 135,400 cases of colorectal cancer will be diagnosed in the United States in 2001, with 56,700 deaths. The risk for colorectal cancer increases with age, and is also higher in African Americans who have a greater risk for more advanced stage cancers at diagnosis, as well as a higher mortality. Risk also increases with some intestinal diseases and in persons with a family history of colorectal cancer or colorectal polyps. Lack of physical activity may also contribute, and dietary factors such as

-more-

low fruit and vegetable intake, low-fiber and high-fat diet, obesity and alcohol consumption may be associated with an increased risk as well.

The Health Department will be offering free lectures on colorectal cancer and prostate awareness at libraries throughout the County. These presentations will educate participants about risk factors; signs and symptoms; and screening guidelines. Free take home fecal occult blood test kits will be available for persons over the age of 50 years old. Presentations are scheduled as follows:

- Friday, March 2nd, 1:00 p.m. at the New Rochelle Public Library
- Monday, March 12th, 7:00 p.m. at the Ossining Public Library
- Tuesday, March 13th, 2:00 p.m. at the Mount Vernon Public Library
- Tuesday, March 13th, 6:00 p.m. at the Port Chester Public Library
- Monday, March 19th, 2:00 p.m. at the Greenburgh Public Library
- Monday, April 9th, 6:00 p.m. at the Port Chester Public Library
- Monday, April 23rd, 10:30 a.m. at the Larchmont Public Library

For additional information concerning colorectal cancer or any of the scheduled presentations, contact the Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 637-4700.

-30-