



**COUNTY OF POLK**  
**Health Department**  
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## **Polk County Health Department News Release**

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### **Free Colorectal Cancer Screening Offered by Polk County Health Department**

March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month and the Polk County Health Department is participating in a free and ongoing colon cancer screening program. The Iowa Get Screened: Colorectal Cancer Program helps save lives from one of the most deadly, yet most preventable diseases by providing free colorectal cancer screening to individuals who qualify.

Rick Kozin, Polk County Health Department Director said, “Because 7 out of 10 people diagnosed with colorectal cancer had no warning signs it is extremely important to have regular screening done. In fact if everyone aged 50 or older were screened regularly as many as 60% of deaths from colorectal cancer could be prevented.”

Colorectal cancer starts as a tiny growth or “polyp” in the colon (large intestines) or rectum. Screening gives doctors a chance to find and remove polyps before they turn into cancer. Most people have no symptoms at all but some people can have symptoms that include blood in their stool, belly pain for no clear reason, or unintentional weight loss. People who have a close family member who has had colorectal cancer are at a higher risk of developing it as well.

“Getting regular screenings, living a healthy lifestyle that includes healthy eating and exercise, and knowing your family history are the best ways to reduce your chances of dying from colorectal cancer” said Mr. Kozin.

Even though colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the U.S. only 64% of Iowans aged 50 and over have ever been screened. Everyone over age 50 should be screened. People who are younger than 50 and have had signs or symptoms, have a close relative who has had colorectal cancer, or has ulcerative colitis, Crohn’s disease or inflammatory bowel disease should be screened.

The Iowa Get Screened program is funded by the Iowa Department of Public Health. To participate in the free screening program individuals must be between the ages of 50-64, be uninsured or underinsured, have a household income of up to 250% of the federal poverty guidelines, and have not previously been screened for colorectal cancer. For more information or to see if you qualify call 286-2192.