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For Immediate Release

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Free Colon Cancer Screening Test Kits

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) has free home screening kits available for residents of the health district who are interested in screening for colorectal cancer. Colorectal cancer is the second deadliest cancer in the U.S. for men and women, and rates of colon cancer diagnosis and death remain higher in Nebraska compared to overall U.S. rates. SWNPHD along with their healthcare partners are working to increase the number of people being screened for colon cancer in order to reduce these rates.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), your risk of getting colorectal cancer increases as you get older, with more than 90% of cases occurring in people aged 50 or older. Rates of colon cancer have increased in recent decades among individuals younger than 50, so much so that the official recommended age for colon cancer screening was recently reduced from 50 to 45.

“The free FOBT kits are for anyone ages 45 to 75,” explains Paula Callahan, Program Manager for SWNPHD. “You may pick a kit up at our McCook office or call and request one at 308-345-4223. Simply follow the enclosed directions on the kit, then mail the kit in the enclosed envelope to the lab for testing. The test results will be mailed back to you to share with your doctor.”

SWNPHD is providing these fecal occult blood test (FOBT) kits through a grant from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. Home screening tests are used to look for signs of colorectal cancer early on when a person doesn't have any symptoms. Catching it early greatly increases survival rates and makes treatment easier and cheaper. However, the most accurate method of screening for colorectal cancer is to have a colonoscopy, so residents should discuss their risk factors with their healthcare provider to find out which test is best for them.

Risk Factors for Colorectal Cancer:

- Age 45 years or older.
- Inflammatory bowel disease such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis.
- A family history of colorectal cancer or colorectal polyps.
- Obesity, alcohol consumption and tobacco use.

Anyone wanting to support the statewide awareness effort is invited to wear blue on Friday, March 4 and share on social media platforms using the hashtags #DressInBlueNE and #FightBackNE.

For more information on programs at Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department, view our website at www.swhealth.ne.gov which contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health, or follow us on Facebook and Instagram. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th Street, McCook – one block north of Arby's. SWNPHD serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties.

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