



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE
Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH
Commissioner

Dear Health Care Professional:

Colorectal cancer causes more cancer deaths among nonsmokers than any other form of cancer. In New York City almost 1500 people die each year from this largely preventable cancer. The best way to test for – and prevent – colon cancer is colonoscopy. Thanks to health professionals like you, the colonoscopy rate in those 50 and older rose from 42% in 2003 to 62% in 2007, and most racial disparities in colon cancer screening disappeared. Nevertheless, 4 in 10 eligible patients are still not optimally screened.

Colon cancer can be prevented. The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene recommends that you:

- 1. Refer patients age 50 and older or patients age 40 and older with a family history of colon cancer for a colonoscopy.** If a colonoscopy is not possible, a high sensitivity FOBT (Fecal Occult Blood Test) is recommended.
- 2. Simplify the referral process by directly referring appropriate patients for colonoscopy, rather than first sending patients to a GI consultation.**

Representatives from the Health Department are visiting health care providers and staff to promote colonoscopy for colorectal cancer screening. Representatives will provide clinical tools, provider resources and patient education materials to assist you in referring your patients for colonoscopy.

A recent addition to the clinical tools available to you is the “Direct Referral for Colonoscopy Procedure” form, developed together by the Health Department and the Citywide Colon Cancer Control Coalition (C5) and in collaboration with the New York Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy. This form will help you identify patients who are eligible for direct referral and includes resources for identifying health care providers who accept direct referrals.

I hope you find the contents of this Colon Cancer Screening Action Kit useful. If you have any questions about the enclosed materials, please contact Corinne Meli in the Cancer Prevention and Control Program at cmeli@health.nyc.gov. Thank you for your dedication and contribution to the health of all New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas R. Frieden".

Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH
Commissioner
New York City Department of
Health and Mental Hygiene