



**March is Colon Cancer Awareness Month:
Get screened, reduce your risk and know the warning signs**
National Dress in Blue Day is Friday, March 5

Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls, WI – Although colon cancer is a preventable and curable disease if caught early, it remains the second-leading cause of cancer deaths in men and women in the United States. It's predicted that more than 149,000 people will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer this year.

The American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons recommends people at an average risk of getting colon cancer receive a colonoscopy beginning at age 50; age 45 for African Americans. Increased risk patients may need earlier and more frequent screening depending upon recommendation by a health care provider.

HSHS Sacred Heart and St. Joseph's hospitals offer the following information to help in the screening, prevention and detection of colon cancer.

People at an increased risk for colon cancer include:

- Those with a personal or family history of colorectal polyps or cancer
- Those with a personal history of breast, uterine or ovarian cancer
- Those with chronic ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease
- Those with a diet rich in red meat (ex. beef, pork and lamb) and/or processed meats (ex. bacon, sausage and cold cuts)

In addition to regular screening for colon cancer, you may also be able to lower your risk by:

- Avoiding foods high in fat
- Adding more vegetables, fruits and other high-fiber foods to your diet
- Exercising regularly and maintaining a normal body weight
- Not smoking
- Drinking alcohol in moderation

Warning signs of colorectal cancer can include:

- Blood in or on the stool
- Recurrent shifts in normal bowel habits such as experiencing diarrhea or constipation for no known reason
- Thinning of the stool
- Increases in stomach discomfort (bloating, gas, fullness and/or cramps that last more than a few days)
- A feeling that the bowel does not empty completely
- Weight loss for no known reason
- Constant and unexplained fatigue

“The earlier we can spot any signs of colon cancer or polyps, which are growths on the wall of the intestine, before they become cancerous is critical in the successful prevention and treatment of this type of cancer,” said HSHS radiology registered nurse, Michael Lucore.

Those interested in recognizing Colon Cancer Awareness Month are encouraged to wear blue for National Dress in Blue Day on Friday, March 5. For more information about colon cancer screening, prevention and treatment, click [here](#).

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About HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital

[HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital](#) is sponsored by Hospital Sisters Ministries, the [Hospital Sisters of St. Francis](#) is the Founding Institute, and it is an affiliate of [Hospital Sisters Health System](#). Since 1889, it has been meeting patient needs in western Wisconsin with the latest medical innovations and technology, together with a Franciscan whole-person healing tradition.

About HSHS St. Joseph’s Hospital

[HSHS St. Joseph’s Hospital](#) is sponsored by Hospital Sisters Ministries, the [Hospital Sisters of St. Francis](#) is the Founding Institute, and it is an affiliate of [Hospital Sisters Health System](#). Since 1885, it has served the people of the Chippewa Falls area with health care that is high tech and high touch. Known locally for the quality of the care it provides patients, the hospital has been recognized nationally for its outstanding patient satisfaction levels.

About Hospital Sisters Health System

Hospital Sisters Health System’s (HSHS) mission is to reveal and embody Christ’s healing love for all people through our high quality, Franciscan health care ministry. HSHS provides state-of-the-art health care to our patients and is dedicated to serving all people, especially the most vulnerable, at each of our physician practices and 15 local hospitals in two states - Illinois (Breese, Decatur, Effingham, Greenville, Highland, Litchfield, O’Fallon, Shelbyville and Springfield) and Wisconsin (Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire, Oconto Falls, Sheboygan, and two in Green Bay). HSHS is sponsored by Hospital Sisters Ministries, and [Hospital Sisters of St. Francis](#) is the founding institute. For more information about HSHS, visit www.hshs.org. For more information about Hospital Sisters of St. Francis, visit www.hospitalsisters.org.