



# Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month



by *Dr. Charles Duckworth, M.D.*

March is colon cancer awareness month. Unfortunately, many Americans are familiar with this killer. Colon cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in the United States. You likely have a friend or family member who has been stricken by this horrible disease. It is an equal opportunity assassin, targeting men, women, African Americans, Caucasians, and Hispanics, rich and poor alike. Even as a nonsmoker, you only have a slightly decreased risk over smokers.

This is a disease that can be stopped. Colon cancer screening can reduce your risk of dying from colon cancer by 50-95% depending on the screening test used. The best and most commonly performed test is a colonoscopy. A colonoscopy once every 10 years after the age of 50 reduces your risk of dying from colon cancer by 80-95%.

I am often asked, "Why not wait until symptoms appear before performing a colonoscopy?" Unfortunately, colon cancer is often silent until the later stages. By the time symptoms appear, the cancer is often far advanced, with no curable options.

Many of you have fears of colonoscopy related to possible

## MEET THE DOCTOR

### BOARD CERTIFICATION:

Internal Medicine and Gastroenterology

### MEDICAL DEGREE:

M.D., Medical College of Georgia

### RESIDENCY:

Internal Medicine, University of Virginia

### FELLOWSHIPS:

Gastroenterology, University of Virginia

### AFFILIATIONS:

St. Joseph's/Candler Hospitals  
Memorial University  
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### AREAS OF EXPERTISE:

Endoscopic Retrograde Cholangiopancreatography (ERCP), particularly in pancreatic disease

discomfort or the risk of complications. Pain is rarely an issue as anesthetics are used during the exam. With an experienced colonoscopist, the risk of a severe complication is approximately 1 in 3000-4000. When one compares this to a 1 in 20 lifetime risk of developing colon cancer, the procedural risks seem inconsequential. The next time you are at the mall, look around and realize that

out of every hundred people you see, five are likely to develop colon cancer if no screening is performed. How much of a risk are you willing to take?

How does colonoscopy prevent colon cancer deaths? During colonoscopy, small growths in the colon called polyps are removed. Most colon cancers develop from polyps. One may even have small colon cancers removed at the time of colonoscopy.

At the Center for Digestive and Liver Health, we have seven board-certified Gastroenterologists who can determine the best screening method for you. We have access to the most advanced equipment and screening tools. We perform thousands of colonoscopies yearly, with safety and quality records that far exceed national averages. As for me, I have already had my colonoscopy because I do not want to be one of the one in twenty. Please make your appointment today. It is a phone call that could save your life.



*Dr. Charles Duckworth, M.D.*

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*and The Endoscopy Center*

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