

## Don't Wait for Symptoms

Colorectal cancer kills. It's the third most common form of cancer and the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths among Americans. But there's good news: If caught early, it's also among the most treatable.



The Physicians of Gastroenterology Associates of the Piedmont

**G**astroenterology Associates of the Piedmont provides a comfortable, patient-centered approach to help aid in the prevention of colorectal cancer.

"If you discover colorectal cancer early, the cure rate is about 90 percent," says Dr. Sean Harris, board-certified gastroenterologist (third from the left in photo). "You can't get much better than that, as far as cancers go. That's why colonoscopy screening is so important."

### Patient-Centered Specialization

The thought of undergoing a colonoscopy can be intimidating. Patients who visit Gastroenterology Associates of the Piedmont ("GAP") are pleasantly surprised at how easy the procedure really is. With the advanced sedation methods that are available today, it's over before they know it.

The value of a screening colonoscopy is clear, so much so that most insurance companies fully cover them for people 50 years of age or older when used as a preventative service. Certain populations such as African Americans and people with a family history of colorectal cancer or colon polyps are at higher risk and are encouraged to begin screening earlier.

The open-access policy that GAP offers allows for first-time screenings without a referral, making the scheduling process easy and convenient for

patients. Pre-screening questions are answered over the phone, eliminating the pre-visit that many offices require prior to a procedure. Most first-time screeners are healthy enough to have their procedure scheduled in one of the outpatient endoscopy centers.

GAP's management of day-to-day operations, as well as their scheduling and billing departments, are handled in-house. "That's one of the great benefits of being an independent practice," says Harris. "When patients call, they're talking to someone who works in the same building as their doctor. It helps to keep the personable experience we strive for."

Being the home to North Carolina's first licensed outpatient endoscopy center, GAP's centers maintain accreditation by the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care. In addition, its clinics have become the first single-specialty gastroenterology practices in North Carolina to be recognized by the National Center for Quality Assurance (NCQA) as Patient-Centered Specialty Practices. These recognitions, along with centuries of combined experience across 15 board-certified physicians, demonstrates the practice's commitment to quality care.

### A Professional and Understanding Environment

Gastroenterology is more than cancer screenings. In fact, GAP treats a wide variety of conditions and diseases that

affect the gastrointestinal tract: the esophagus, stomach, small intestine, colon, rectum, pancreas, gallbladder, and liver. Patients should make an appointment with a gastroenterologist if they're experiencing any symptoms such as:

- Difficulty swallowing
- Persistent abdominal pain
- Persistent diarrhea or constipation
- Blood in the stool or stool that has a black, tar-like appearance

Gastrointestinal screenings and conditions can be difficult for people to talk about—but these are issues that GAP's professionals discuss and treat every day. "Our doctors, advanced practitioners, and staff are certainly empathetic," says Harris. "They provide a comfortable and understanding environment so that people know it's OK to talk about these things, because it's the only way we can help."



Serving the Piedmont Triad and surrounding communities with locations in Winston-Salem, Clemmons, and King.

336-448-2427  
gaggi.com