

SAVANNAH HEALTHCARE PROFILES

Stop Colon Cancer in Its Tracks

Preventive colon cancer screenings are recommended at age 45 and should not be put off, say experts at The Center for Digestive & Liver Health.

DR. BRENT ACKER,
GASTROENTEROLOGIST

Colon cancer has a bad reputation—and deservedly so. Among cancers, it's the second-deadliest type, killing 50,000 people per year, and the third-most common, with 140,000 cases per year.

The good news: It's also the most preventable cancer. Catch it early, and there's a 90% chance of a five-year survival rate.

Due to an increased prevalence of colon cancer in people under age 50, the American Cancer Society (ACS) has lowered the recommended colon cancer screening age to 45. Additionally, if a first-degree family member has colon cancer, ACS recommends getting screened at an age 10 years younger than when that family member was diagnosed. The earlier the preventive screening, the better the chance of detecting and treating the cancer in its infantile stage.

"If everyone had a colonoscopy at the recommended time, we would truncate the number of colon cancer cases," says Dr. Brent Acker, a gastroenterologist at The Center for Digestive & Liver Health (CDLH) in Savannah.

"Ideally, we want to screen people when they're symptom-free. Ignoring symptoms can be a life-changing decision. Far too many individuals assume hemorrhoids are the cause of their rectal bleeding."


Eager to get patients in the door before it's too late, CDLH promotes the importance of preventive colon cancer screenings, which are performed at its endoscopy center. There, gastroenterologists like Dr. Acker administer comfortable and painless colonoscopies. "We know that patients have aversions to getting a colonoscopy," he says. "At CDLH, we make it as easy as possible."

EASY, PAINLESS—AND LIFE-SAVING

Colonoscopies are perceived as being invasive, unbearable, and embarrassing. Dr. Acker disagrees with that characterization—and not just because colonoscopies save lives. "The procedure has evolved," he says. "We engage in a patient-specific process where we talk about people's concerns and issues and make the experience as easy as possible."

No longer must patients drink gallons of liquids to prep their system for the next day's procedure. Today's prep methods include a variety of options such as pills and low-volume split doses of liquids for those who can't drink a lot of fluids. The colonoscopy itself is a 20-minute procedure that's totally pain-free—mainly because the patient enjoys "twilight" anesthesia for the duration. While some patients feel embarrassed about the intimate nature of it all, there's really no reason to be, says Dr. Acker, whose team at CDLH performs more than 5,000 colonoscopies each year. "We make it a respectful, private experience," he says. "Remember, everyone needs a colonoscopy, from presidents to plumbers and even us gastroenterologists."

Getting a colonoscopy at a reputable facility can make all the difference. CDLH's endoscopy center is seamlessly run and staffed by a team of seasoned and caring nurses who are beloved by patients. Dr. Acker himself receives referrals from all over Southeast Georgia and the South Carolina low country.

THE CENTER FOR
 Digestive & Liver Health
and The Endoscopy Center
savannahgi.com

Savannah Office | 1139 Lexington Avenue, Suite A
Savannah, GA 31404 | 912-303-4200

Hardeeville Office | 1010 Medical Center Drive, Suite 100
Hardeeville, SC 29927 | 843-591-1390

Pooler Office | 1000 Town Center Boulevard, Suite 701
Pooler, GA 31322 | 912-303-4200