



UNC Family Medicine Patient Newsletter

October 2021

COVID Vaccines Are Safe & Effective!

Monthly reminder that we offer FREE COVID-19 vaccinations at the Family Medicine Center! ***These vaccines are safe and do work well against both getting COVID-19 and keeping you out of the hospital or worse.*** 90% of patients hospitalized with COVID-19 and 96% in intensive care are people who have remained unvaccinated! Large numbers of COVID-19 patients in our hospitals make it difficult for others to receive care. We hope that you or family and friends on the fence will make an appointment to get protected today! We want to make sure everyone realizes what's at stake, so we're hearing from some of the doctors you know who also work at UNC Chapel Hill Hospital delivering babies, UNC Hillsborough Hospital, and Chatham Hospital. From Dr. Ashley Rietz:



Get Vaccinated! Do it for your family. Do it for your friends. Do it for your community.

I get so excited when I'm working with a patient who has decided to get their first COVID-19 vaccine. I'm excited because I know they are protecting themselves, protecting those around them, and helping us end this pandemic. It has been heartbreaking to sit with my patients who have lost loved ones to COVID-19. I don't want to watch anymore families be devastated by this disease.

We can all make a difference. While vaccination rates are slowly and steadily increasing in North Carolina, we need to especially help pregnant people and those currently breastfeeding know that COVID-19 vaccination is SAFE and EFFECTIVE. Also, keep your eyes and ears open for more information

about vaccinations for kids ages 5-11. When my son turns five next month, I am really hoping a COVID-19 vaccine is one of his gifts. Let's do our part. Spread the word and get vaccinated.

If you are an established patient with UNC Family Practice and age 12 and up, you can get a **free COVID-19 vaccine** here Monday through Friday 8:30am to 3:30pm. **Appointments are required – contact us in [My UNC Chart](#)** or call 984-974-0210 to schedule an appointment.

COVID-19 Vaccine Supplemental “Booster”

We are following [CDC guidelines](#) advising a third Pfizer supplemental “booster” shot for the following groups of people who had their last of two shots at least 6 months ago and are:

- 65 years and older
- Age 18+ who live in [long-term care settings](#)
- Age 18+ who have [underlying medical conditions](#)
- Age 18+ who work in [high-risk settings](#)
- Age 18+ who live in [high-risk settings](#)

You may receive these supplemental doses at your local pharmacy, or at any appointment here at Family Medicine. As always, contact us in [My UNC Chart](#) or call us with any questions.

Regardless of your vaccination status, our advice is to wear a mask to protect yourself and others!

Let's Talk Health with Drs. Dana Neutze and Niketa Williams



Dr. Neutze

Dr. Williams

Colorectal Cancer Screenings

Many of our patients who socially distanced at home due to COVID-19 also delayed their routine, in-person visits to the doctor. Now, they find themselves overdue for important health screenings. This month, we want to talk about the importance of regular screenings for colorectal cancer.

Colorectal Cancer – sometimes also called *Colon Cancer* – is a cancer found in the colon/large intestines or the rectum. In the United States, over 140,000 people per year are diagnosed with colon cancer, and it is the third leading cause of cancer deaths in men and women. Most colon cancers begin as extra growths, called *polyps*, in the lining of the colon or large intestine. These growths can turn into cancer, but for many people, if the polyps can be removed early, that can greatly decrease the chance of colon cancer. The importance of screening is to find polyps or colon cancer at an early stage, when treatment works the best. If caught and treated early, the chance of surviving colon cancer after being diagnosed is over 80%.

Risk Factors

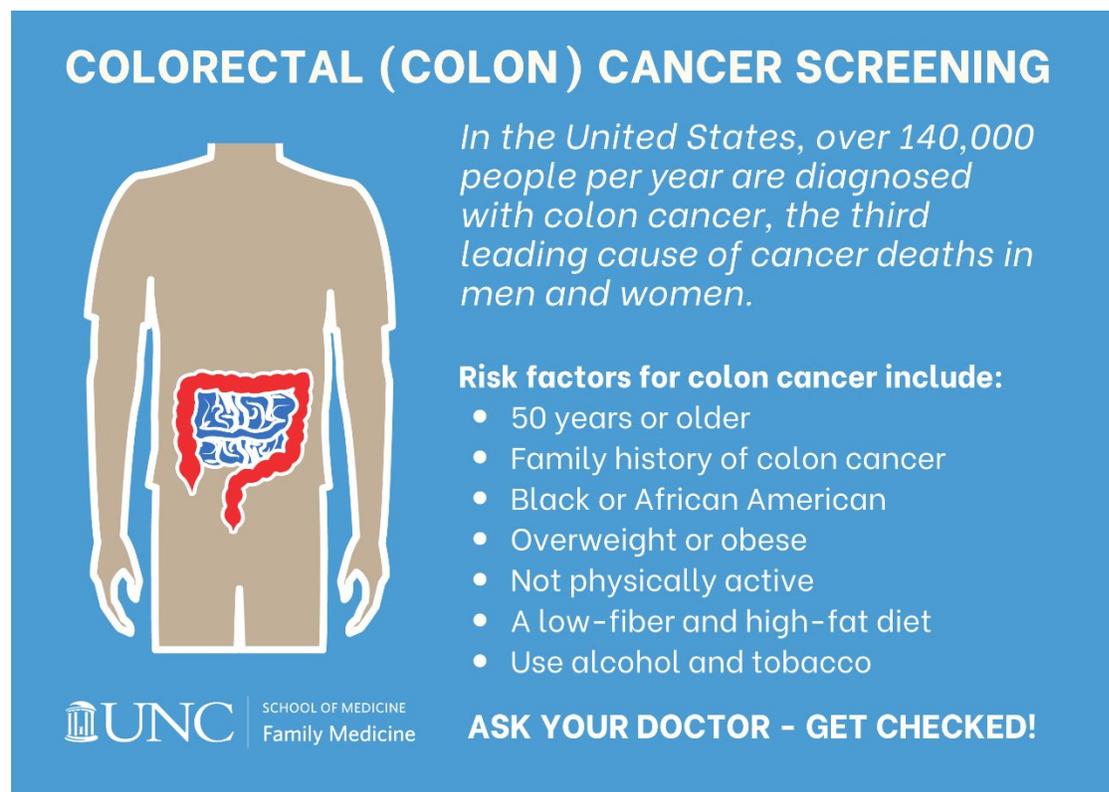
Your risk of getting colorectal cancer increases as you get older. More than 90% of cases occur in people who are 50 years old or older. Other risk factors include having:

- Inflammatory bowel disease such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis.
- A personal or family history of colorectal cancer or colorectal polyps.
- A racial identity classified as Black or African-American.
- A genetic condition such as familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP) or hereditary non-polyposis colorectal cancer (HNPCC or Lynch syndrome).

Lifestyle factors that may contribute to an increased risk of colorectal cancer include:

- Lack of regular physical activity.
- A diet low in fruit and vegetables.
- A low-fiber and high-fat diet.
- Having a body mass index (BMI) listed as overweight or obese.
- Alcohol and tobacco use.

If you believe you are at increased risk for colon cancer, it is important that you speak with your doctor about when to begin screening, which test is right for you, and how often you should be screened for colon cancer.



COLORECTAL (COLON) CANCER SCREENING

In the United States, over 140,000 people per year are diagnosed with colon cancer, the third leading cause of cancer deaths in men and women.

Risk factors for colon cancer include:

- 50 years or older
- Family history of colon cancer
- Black or African American
- Overweight or obese
- Not physically active
- A low-fiber and high-fat diet
- Use alcohol and tobacco

ASK YOUR DOCTOR - GET CHECKED!

UNC SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
Family Medicine

Symptoms

Polyps and colon cancer don't always cause symptoms, especially at first, and you could have either of these and not know it. Regardless of your age, if you have any of the following symptoms, talk to your doctor about whether screening is right for you:

- Blood in or on the stool (bowel movement).
- Change in the caliber of your stools, such as pencil-sized stools.
- Stomach pain, aches, or cramps that do not go away.
- Losing weight and you don't know why.

Who should get screened?

Recently, recommendations for who should begin screening have changed to include more people. Regular colon cancer screening is recommended for all adults aged 45 to 75 years. If you're younger than 45 and think you may be at high risk of getting colorectal cancer, or if you're older than 75, ask your doctor if you should be screened. Of note: not all insurance may currently be covering 45-49 year olds, since this is a new recommendation, so it is best to check with your insurance first.

Screening Options

There are several options for colon cancer screening tests. There are many factors to consider when deciding which option would be best for each person. Each screening test has a different length of time between tests, method to look for colon cancer, location for where the test can be performed, and follow-up procedure for any abnormal findings.

- **Colonoscopy** – In this procedure, a provider uses a medical tube with a camera to see the inside of the colon. If normal, this test is repeated every 10 years.
- **Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) stool test**- This is a screening test you can do right at home. Using the kit provided, you take a sample of your stool and send it back to the lab. The lab then tests for blood. If your test is normal, this is repeated every year.
- **DNA-FIT (Cologuard) stool test**- This is another screening test you can do at home. Using the kit provided, you take a sample of your stool and send it back to the lab, and the lab tests for colon cancer markers. If your test is normal, this is repeated every 1-3 years.

Please understand that now may be a challenging time to get important preventive screenings like colonoscopies done quickly, because many people were unable to receive them throughout the pandemic, and waiting times may now be as long as two months. If you are at low or normal risk for colon cancer, and would like to arrange for colon cancer screenings without the wait time, FIT and Cologuard stool tests are available now and are both covered by insurance. Out-of-pocket costs for FIT tests are around \$50 for those without insurance.

Why you should get screened, from Stacy Scott, FNPC



At age 34, my older sister was diagnosed with stage 4 colon cancer. She was a fierce advocate for awareness and had plans to attend a conference in Washington DC, unfortunately she passed a week prior at age 37. Of approximately 200 students in her high school graduating class, 5 were diagnosed with colon cancer before the age of 40.

I am a nurse practitioner here at FMC and work in the urgent care. One of the many lessons I learned from my sister's experience is to truly listen to my patients.

I wish I had done so with my sister when she called me concerned with her level of fatigue. I immediately reminded her she was the mother of 3 young children, worked full time as a teacher for special needs students, was involved in the church and numerous social committees. Obviously she knew these things and was trying to tell me it was something more. I will forever wonder if I had listened closer and recommended she go in for a check up if her cancer could have been caught sooner, and if she would have lived to see her kids grow into the beautiful people they are today.

While I can't change the past, I can listen to my patients concerns and work to advocate for their futures. Get screened!

Don't forget to get your flu shot!

It's flu season, and getting the flu shot is more important than ever. The flu, like COVID-19, is a highly-contagious virus that is spread by inhaling respiratory droplets in the air after an infected person coughs or sneezes. By getting vaccinated for flu you can protect yourself in two ways: First, the flu vaccine helps reduce the chance of becoming infected by a life-threatening virus. Second, if a vaccinated person *does* contract the flu, the risk of hospitalization death is greatly reduced, as compared to people who have not been vaccinated.

You can get your flu shot and your COVID-19 vaccine on the same day. We recommend flu vaccines for everyone over 6 months old and recommend COVID-19 vaccination for all individuals over the age of 12. Getting your flu and Covid-19 shots at the FMC is quick and easy! If you are already planning to see us for an appointment, we can give you your flu and/or COVID-19 shot at the same time. We are also offering several Saturday walk-in flu shot hours throughout the remainder of October, from 8:00AM-11:45AM. Patients who attend walk-in hours may also bring their family members for flu shots! Even if you don't get your flu shot from us, there are plenty of other options including pharmacies and certain grocery stores. If you do receive your flu vaccine elsewhere, please let us know in [My UNC Chart!](#)

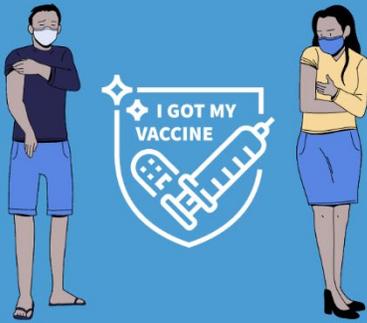
Please remember the 3 W's as we battle both COVID-19 and the flu virus this fall:

Wear your mask

Wash your hands frequently
Wait 6 feet away from others

FLU VS COVID-19 SYMPTOMS

COVID-19 and flu symptoms are oftentimes the same, so you should consult with your doctor immediately if you start to experience any of these:



Both COVID-19 and flu:

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle pain or body aches
- Headache
- Vomiting and diarrhea (in children more than adults)

COVID-19:

- Possible change in or loss of taste or smell

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HEALTHSM

UNC Family Medicine
590 Manning Drive
Chapel Hill, NC 27599
(984) 974-0210



STARTING SEPTEMBER 25!

SATURDAY FLU SHOT CLINIC

8:00AM-11:45AM

- September 25
- October 2
- October 9
- October 16
- October 23
- October 30

WALK-INS WELCOME!

For established Family Medicine patients and families only

Updates from the FMC

New Clinic Schedule

In case you missed it, the Family Medicine Clinic and Urgent Care hours were updated beginning on July 1st:

Family Medicine Clinic

Monday: 7:00 AM – 7:00 PM
Tuesday: 7:00 AM – 7:00 PM
Wednesday: 9:30 AM – 7:00 PM
Thursday: 7:00 AM – 7:00 PM
Friday: 7:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Saturday: 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Urgent Care

Monday-Friday: 7:00 AM- 9:00 PM
Saturday-Sunday: 12:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Be on the lookout for updates on holiday hours in our next newsletter!

Want to keep up with the amazing work our faculty and staff are accomplishing? Follow [UNC Family Medicine](#) on social media!



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