



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Senator Griffo's Weekly Column #13: Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO March 27, 2014

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Colorectal cancer: The mere mention of these words has me squirming in my seat. And surely, I'm not alone.

It's a subject no one wants to bring up in conversation, but also one that could save your life.

So allow me to get the conversation started, in honor of my mother – who is a survivor.

If you're between 50 and 75 years old, you should be getting screened regularly for colorectal cancer. If you're younger than 50 but there's a family history of cancer, Crohn's disease or colitis, you should be talking to your doctor about when to start getting tested.

Why? Each year, about 140,000 Americans – 10,000 New Yorkers – are diagnosed with colorectal cancer. Nine out of 10 of them are 50 years of age or older. Fifty thousand people die because of colorectal cancer every year, including 3,500 New Yorkers.

If everyone 50 or older got screened, 60 percent of the deaths could be prevented. Sixty percent!

Colorectal, breast and cervical cancer screenings are covered through Medicaid as well as all of the health plans that can be purchased from the New York State of Health marketplace. Check with your plan; many will cover preventative screenings at either no cost or little cost to you. Screenings take between 20 and 45 minutes.

You're giving up less than an hour of your life and perhaps a little money to avoid the possibility of dying of fanny cancer. That's more than a fair trade, if you ask me.

I'm certainly thankful to have had my mother with us for an additional 10 years...and counting.

If you're ready to get started, here are the organizations that stand ready to help:

- Cancer Services Program of Lewis & Jefferson Counties: Call (877) 449-6626 or (315) 376-5498
- Cancer Services Program of Oneida, Herkimer & Madison Counties: Call (315) 798-5229 or (315) 266-6121
- Cancer Services Program of St. Lawrence County: Call (315) 261-4760, then choose option 1