

# COLON CANCER SCREENING AWARENESS: THE MISSED CHANCE THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING



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I've seen too many lives changed forever by "the missed chance." Like watching rain clouds gather but forgetting to bring in the clothes from the line—sometimes the simplest oversights have the most significant consequences. Few things break my heart more than discovering a cancer that a thorough screening could have prevented. Stick with me here—I'm about to tell you a brief story. Meet James, a hardworking man from Alabama who was in good health but had lost a brother to colon cancer. Like many of us, he wasn't exactly thrilled about getting a colonoscopy. I mean, who is? It's about as fun as watching paint dry while standing on your head.

At 54, he scheduled his first colonoscopy but found the bowel prep too cumbersome—he fumbled the process (you know, that fun drink that makes you best friends with your bathroom). The doctor couldn't get a clear view and recommended a repeat in a year. Frustrated, James opted for a stool test instead. It came back negative, and he moved on, believing he was safe.

Fast forward four years—James started noticing some concerning changes in the bathroom department: shifts in his bowel

habits and occasional blood in his stool. He dismissed it as hemorrhoids. His wife (bless her heart) practically pushed him through the doctor's office door. This time, he followed the bowel prep instructions correctly—like they were the secret recipe to his grandma's famous pie.

The colonoscopy revealed a mass that could have been caught years earlier. A challenging year of surgery and chemotherapy followed. Thankfully, James survived, but it was a battle he should never have had to fight.

## Colon Cancer: Preventable, but Deadly

Colon cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in the U.S. But here's the thing—it's also one of the most preventable cancers. Precancerous polyps can be removed before they turn deadly, and even early-stage cancer is far more treatable. The key? Proper screening.

There are several screening options:

- **Stool-based tests** (like Cologuard and FIT) detect blood or DNA markers but don't allow for immediate action. This is not ideal for people with a family history or prior history of polyps.
- **CT colonography** provides imaging but requires a follow-up colonoscopy if anything abnormal appears.
- **Colonoscopy** is the gold standard—it lets doctors play "spot and remove"

with potentially dangerous polyps right then and there.

## Bowel Prep: The Step You Can't Skip

A colonoscopy is only as effective as the bowel preparation. If the colon isn't clean, crucial details may be missed. There are different prep options:

- **Large-volume preps** (polyethylene glycol solutions): More liquid to drink, but highly effective.
- **Small-volume preps** (sodium sulfate solutions): Easier to tolerate but not ideal for everyone.
- **Tablet preps:** A solid option for those who struggle with liquid preps.

Adjusting your diet beforehand, like following a low-residue diet, can improve results. Those with constipation may need a longer prep process.

## Let's Win This Fight Together

Colon cancer prevention is a community effort. As a community, let's look out for one another—spreading awareness, supporting screenings, and encouraging proper preparation.

James' story isn't unique, but it doesn't have to happen again. Talk to your loved ones. Follow through with screenings. And when your doctor tells you to prepare, do it right—it could save your life.

**Let's win this fight together.**

## March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

*Don't wait—early screenings can save your life.*

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