

Colon Cancer Prevention and Screening

Colorectal (colon) cancer is the third-most diagnosed type of cancer in Canada. When colorectal cancer is caught early, most people (90%) recover fully after treatment and cancer is less likely to spread. To reduce your risk of colon cancer:

- maintain a healthy body weight
- be physically active
- reduce alcohol intake
- take calcium/folic acid supplements
- don't smoke
- know your family history
- most importantly, get screened.

Everyone between the ages of 50 and 74 should get a colon cancer screening every two years if their risk of cancer is average. Rexdale CHC offers this free screening to patients enrolled with our Primary Health Care. There are two screening tests: Fecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT) and Colonoscopy.

FOBT

FOBT is a simple test that you can do yourself in your own home. When you receive an FOBT kit from your provider, check the expiry date. If your kit is expired or expiring within a month, contact your provider about getting a replacement. Don't take the test if you already have symptoms of colon cancer or you have blood in your urine. Wait three days after you stop bleeding if you're menstruating, bleeding from hemorrhoids or bleeding from dental work.

Send the test off by mail to get your results. You must complete and mail the kit one month before the expiry date. ColonCancerCheck will send your results to you and your health care provider. If you don't get your results within a month, contact your health care provider. If your result is negative, you will get a reminder of your next test in two years. If your result is positive, it means there's blood in your stool but doesn't always mean you have cancer. You'll need to follow up with a colonoscopy to find out. Your health care provider will contact you to arrange the next steps.

Colonoscopy

A colonoscopy is an examination of the lining of your rectum and colon using a long flexible tube with a camera on the end. This test is for people with a higher risk of cancer. Your doctor may recommend this test if you have a positive FOBT result or a sibling, child or parent had colorectal cancer.



ColonCancerCHECK
Early detection could save your life!

PRIDE in Rexdale

Since 2014, Rexdale CHC has been collaborating with RexPride to facilitate LGBTQ programs, community outreach and events for youth and the community. QMAP is the Queer Media Arts Program, which works with youth who identify as being LGBTQ and allies. We provide supports to



“It makes you feel that you’re not just alone doing this.”

“We’re surrounded by people that understand us.”

help with issues LGBTQ youth face regarding mental health, housing, school, health care, etc. Over time the youth have grown together to become a support system for one another.

One of the focuses of the program is to break down LGBTQ barriers and stigmas in Rexdale. The youth participate in outreach and workshops in the community by sharing their stories and talking about the program. The youth identified

Rexdale CHC as one of the few safe LGBTQ spaces in Rexdale. The goal is to make the whole Rexdale community more LGBTQ friendly.

Last year they shared with us how they feel about the community. “Queer representation in Rexdale... that was my biggest struggle, and I feel like most of us who live in Rexdale, Etobicoke region, still struggle with this idea of ‘alone.’ And I felt this so much...”

We also celebrate events such as Day of Pink on April 11. This event started in Nova Scotia when two students saw another gay student being bullied for wearing pink. The two students intervened to help the student and later they asked their school to wear pink to stand in solidarity to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying.

Each year we also take part in Pride events. This year we marched in the Pride parade; other years we have watched the parade and took part in different activities that happened through out the weekend. We look forward to the Rexdale community being a more LGBTQ friendly space!

Mental Health and Well-Being

Mental health—just like physical health—is health. A common misconception is that mental health is just about mental illness. Our mental health is also about generally feeling good about who we are, having a sense of balance in our lives, having social support, feeling hopeful about the future, being able to get back up when we get knocked down, and feeling like we matter. Here are ideas for how to support your own

mental health:

1. Create a self-care plan.

Create a plan to do things that help bring you joy, clarity, and wellness such as keeping a reflective journal, joining in religious worship, practising mindfulness meditation, taking a bath, writing out three things daily that you’re grateful for, saying yes to yourself even if it means saying no to someone else, and making time with



positive friends and family. What does your self-care plan look like? **Tip:** Put your plan somewhere visible to remind you that your self-care is important.

2. Build and use your social support system Having a social support system helps

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Pathways to Education Rexdale -Digital Lab

A few years ago Pathways to Education Rexdale opened a computer lab in the community where much of our programming takes place. To address the digital needs of our students, we applied for and received grants from TELUS to establish the Pathways Rexdale/TELUS Digital Learning Centre. The TELUS investment enabled us to purchase hardware and software and offset a number of the set-up costs to make our digital vision a reality for our youth.

This centre provides tools and the space necessary to effectively deliver Pathways' core tutoring and mentoring programs in an interactive, connected environment. The Centre allows our 400 plus students safe and convenient access to online tutoring tools

such as Khan Academy) and other information only available through technology. They can do independent learning and homework as well as group study and training. They can get help with computing questions and even practice their presentations.

This Centre currently allows for 27 workstations and a group meeting space/ wired lounge area to foster creative discussion in a safe and welcoming environment. Symcor, one of our corporate partners, also runs coding sessions there.



The programs that run in the Digital Lab are directly aligned with our mission to break the cycle of poverty through education. These programs ensure that the educational support students receive use technology that is up to date and effective in helping them acquire the skills and competencies they need to successfully navigate their educational journey towards high school graduation and beyond.

Next year we are planning to run an interactive Digital Literacy and Numeracy Program – Competency Mastering Skills (CMS) offered by one of our corporate partners. These skills are important not only to succeed academically but also to secure meaningful employment.

protect you against stress. We usually feel lighter, less stressed, less alone, and more connected after spending time with supportive people. Sometimes our families or loved ones are unable to support us, but we can speak to a mental health counsellor, go to a social support group, and/or tell our families or loved ones what we need from them to feel better supported. **Tip:** *Do something new to build your support*

system. Attend the Adult Social program at 8 Taber Rd., or the Expressive Arts Therapy group at 21 Panorama Crt., or lovingly tell someone in your life how they can better support you.

3. Get Moving! Physical activity has a great impact on our mood and mental health. Research has shown that exercise positively affects the brain chemicals responsible for our mood and thinking. Exercise

can help you cope with stress by improving how you feel about yourself. It can also be a chance to connect with people.

Tip: *Try free yoga at The Hub, 21 Panorama Crt. and/or sign up for the City of Toronto's Welcome Policy for free recreational programs in your area.*

If you have questions about these programs, please contact Eden Abraham at 416-744-0066 x 3226.

Onboard for Collaboration

Over the past number of months, management and designated staff at Rexdale CHC have been involved in a partnership initiative led by the Rexdale Hub. Funded by the United Way, the aim of this initiative is to increase the capacity of the Rexdale Community Hub and partners to collaborate, deepen community engagement with stakeholders at every level, and collectively impact the Hub and wider community in the best possible way. In essence, it's about building a culture of collaboration that will serve the needs of Rexdale Hub users and the wider Hub community.

The beginning of this initiative was primarily spent laying a good foundation. Like building a high-rise tower, the higher you want to build, the deeper goes the foundation. So together

we dug a deep foundation where we focused mainly on building an internal Hub organizational change process. First we listened to and had conversations with partner agency leadership and program staff at the Hub. We were involved in one-on-one conversations, focus groups of mixed cross-agency staff and feedback sessions. We helped develop a collaborative project list of the things we could do together right away, as well as a more long-term project 'wish list'. We also identified a range of voices from the community that could help to drive this initiative; community stakeholders who could provide their perspective and expertise, advise on goal setting, and facilitate that culture shift towards more collaboration. Moreover, we also made a commitment to a knowledge-sharing and capacity-building process that could provide broad community awareness about 1) the

innovation process we were embarking on; 2) stakeholder engagement; and 3) ongoing learning opportunities.

To date, we have been involved in three one-day innovation/change labs. Thanks to Bluenose Change Labs, we were able to have structured conversations between diverse voices about complex issues/problems. The labs are a way for participants to come up with promising solutions, and through prototyping and piloting, eventually a useful product, service or idea gets launched. The first set of ideas that lab



The Bluenose Change Labs gave us an opportunity to get onboard and set sail!

participants came up with had to do with communication and included everything from a What's Happening Board—a board listing all of the Hub's activities that day—placed in a high-visibility place, to producing a video to tell the story of what the Hub is all about.

Each lab has tackled a different issue, but the overarching question we've asked is "If across the Hub community we were 10x more collaborative and thinking like a system about serving the community, what would we be doing? And how would we be doing it?" Most of all, it is about building a Hub culture in which there is opportunity work together to explore new ideas and ways of thinking for collective impact.

Look for future updates and on how you can get involved as we continue to build a culture of collaboration in Rexdale.