



TOP **5** EXCUSES FOR NOT GETTING A COLONOSCOPY: **DEBUNKED**



Perry County Memorial Hospital

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As adults, we are almost constantly hearing about the risks and dangers that may greet us with age. Some of these are inevitable - although others can be avoided by taking action early in the game. Take colon cancer for example. Colon cancer is the **third** leading cause of cancer-related death.

That being said, there are a few simple steps you can take to avoid that statistic. Don't get me wrong, I get it...it's not a fun topic. It is a real-life thing and something that, quite frankly, **NO ONE** wants to encounter.

As many people do, you'll tell yourself, "That'll never happen to me!" ... **But what if it does?** What if it could have been prevented by taking a few small **{and EASY}** precautionary steps? We're going to go over the top **5** excuses for not getting a colonoscopy. Then, we're going to address why you shouldn't make them!



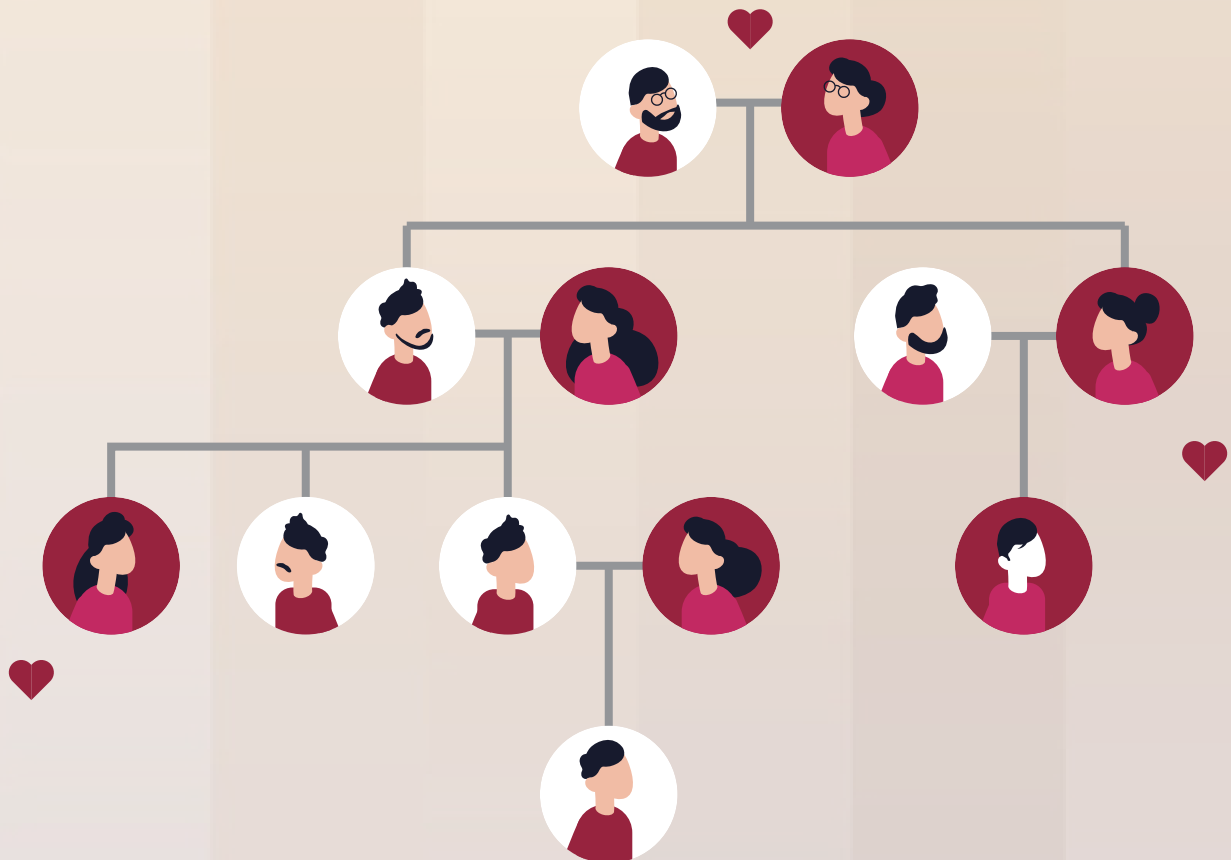
EXCUSE #1

“I have no family history”

“I have no family history.” Alright, yes, family history can play a large role in the likelihood of getting colon cancer. In fact, if a relative has previously been diagnosed, the risk of contracting the disease yourself **doubles**. If that relative is a member of your immediate family, like a parent or sibling, the risk is **even higher**.

In these cases, testing earlier and more frequently is very important. So before you go blaming your brother or your mother, let me assure you, even if you have **ZERO** family history, you still aren't in the clear. There are many other risk factors involved.

What we want you to take away here is that a lack of family history **IS NOT** an excuse! Maybe you aren't sure if it runs in your family. It could be beneficial at this point to find out! Do some digging across the family tree and see what you can find.



EXCUSE #2 “I’m not sure what to expect”

“I’m not sure what to expect.” That’s fair - so, let’s talk about what you can expect when you get a colonoscopy. For starters, a colonoscopy requires specific preparatory tasks. This typically involves dietary restrictions prior to the procedure. During the procedure your gastroenterologist, utilizing a colonoscope, will look for any abnormalities in your colon. It is also imperative to know that during a colonoscopy, you will be sedated.

That means two things, it’s a **pain free** process and you’ll need someone to **drive you home.**

During your colonoscopy, your doctor will even be able to remove certain growths or polyps on the spot. If this happens, they will be sent off to biopsy for identification.

So, we get it. And, your doctor gets it. It’s not the most exciting activity and it certainly doesn’t seem like a fun way to spend a day off work. However, it has the potential to save your life! **Wouldn’t you rather be safe than sorry?**



EXCUSE #3 “I don’t have time”

“I don’t have time.” The problem there is, due to the unbiased characteristics of colon cancer, it waits for no one. You don’t have to jump up at this very moment and head to your local doctor’s office, but the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy recommends that colon cancer screenings start as early as age **45!** The earlier you figure it out, the better. So, before you decide to put this on the back burner for a few more months **{or years}**, let’s look at how much time we’re talking.

This is going to seem a little eerie, yet you should be aware of what’s at stake when it comes to colon cancer. Now, the stage of cancer certainly plays a **huge** role in determining your course of action. If your doctor discovers a small abnormality such as a polyp, they are most likely able to remove it during your colonoscopy. If it is too large, you will need to come back for an additional, minimally invasive removal surgery. So at this point, you are looking at hanging out with your doctor **twice.**



For the folks in a more serious situation, you would need to come back for a surgery that will partially remove a piece of your colon. This surgery is called a Partial Colectomy and can take anywhere from 1-4 hours with a recovery time of 3 days. For those that are faced with actual colon cancer, chemotherapy may be advised. Again, this treatment varies depending on the stage, though it can last up to 2-4 weeks at a time for each treatment.

That was a lot of information to take in at one time. The most important thing to remember here is, **waiting to take action will cost you even more time.**

EXCUSE #4

“What happens if they find something?”

“What happens if they find something?” Just like we talked about before, a lot of what your doctor will be looking for during your procedure can be removed on the spot. It can be taken out and gone from your worries in that same hour. If something more serious is found, at the end of your procedure, it'll be thoroughly addressed. Be confident in the fact that your doctor will never leave you in the dark about what they see. You will be given every piece of information from what it is and what it does to what it looks like and what to do next. Your doctor and their team will be able to come up with a custom plan of action for you. One that you're comfortable with and fully understand.

If signs of colon cancer are found during your colonoscopy, the next step will most likely be **staging**. By determining the strength and level of the disease, it will be easier to decide what treatment will look like for you. Staging can involve taking a few scans or photos of the area. The stages of colon cancer are addressed using Roman numerals on a scale of 0-IV, with less severe cases being limited to the lining of the colon and more severe experiencing spreading throughout the body.



This excuse is rooted in fear, and we completely understand. No one would wish this kind of disease on their worst enemy. But think about this - if you could catch it and take care of it early on, **wouldn't that be better than the alternative?**

EXCUSE #5

“What happens if they **DON’T** find anything?”

“**What happens if they don’t find anything?**” Ahhh, the best-case scenario! What’s great about this procedure is that you are given results **immediately** following. After your doctor gives you the all-clear, what happens next? It’s standard to undergo a colonoscopy about **every 10 years** following your **45th** birthday, but always follow the advice of your doctor, particularly if any of the risk factors below apply to you.



Here’s the good news - there are precautionary, preventative steps you can take to decrease your risk! For starters, **put out that cigarette** and throw away the rest of the pack! Smoking can cause a whole lot more than colon cancer, so decrease your risk of many different diseases with this one.

Next up, try and **limit your alcohol intake**. Not to say you can never indulge again. However, if you find yourself drinking often, cut back.

Here’s an easy one, add some fiber to your diet. Think, **“WHOLE FOODS.”** Whether it’s fresh fruit with breakfast or a cup of mixed nuts to suppress that midday craving, who doesn’t love the chance to eat more while preventing a vicious disease? This ties in with maintaining a healthy diet. Make sure you’re not feeding all of your vegetables to the dogs! You know they’re good for you!

And finally, **exercise!** This can be as simple as taking a walk around the neighborhood a few afternoons a week. **Keep as active as you can!**

These are all small steps that you can take to decrease your likelihood of developing colon cancer. And if you hadn't noticed, these things will make you a better, healthier you all around! By taking actions like these, along with scheduling your own colonoscopy appointment, you are giving yourself **{and your health}** the best chance!

People care more at Perry County Memorial Hospital, including Dr. Matthew Gaeta. With board certifications in Gastroenterology and Internal Medicine as well as over **15 years** of experience, there is absolutely no doubt that you will be in the best, most capable hands.



Be the one that doesn't make an excuse. Click **here** to contact Perry County Memorial Hospital and decrease your risk today.

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