



NEWS RELEASE



For Immediate Release

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(12/11/25) Southern Seven Health Department Receives Subaward Grant from the Illinois Public Health Association to Continue Colorectal Cancer Testing Program (Funding Made Possible by IDPH)

Since 2019, Southern Seven Health Department (S7HD) has provided the Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) to help residents of the seven southernmost Illinois counties prevent colorectal cancer. Through a subaward grant presented to S7HD by the Illinois Public Health Association (IPHA), through funds made possible by a grant from the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), the health department will continue the testing and patient care navigation program through June, 2026.

The purpose of this grant award by IDPH is to increase colorectal cancer (CRC) screening among Illinois adults by supporting statewide outreach, education, and screening access initiatives. Patients with an abnormal FIT result are referred for a colonoscopy by Southern Seven Health Department through the patient care navigation process and provided additional patient support as needed.

FIT is a free, at-home test for patients age 45 to 75 that detects blood in the stool with 97% accuracy. Although FIT does not determine if the patient has CRC, blood can be an indicator of colon polyps. While regular colonoscopies are the best screening choice for CRC, FIT is a good option for patients who are hesitant to begin the coloscopy process or are needing an in-between colonoscopies screening because it does not require a prescription or prep.

Southern Seven Health Department reports that between September, 2019 and July, 2025, of the 612 people who completed FIT with them, 18% (68 people) tested positive. This is higher than the national positivity rate of 7-12%. Of these patients who completed a follow-up colonoscopy, more than half (54%) presented with colon polyps that were removed in early stages, thus preventing possible colorectal cancer.

“The seven southernmost counties of Illinois sit in one of three “hot spots” in the nation for CRC. By this, we know that many people in our region aren’t getting regular colonoscopies, making early detection screenings like FIT even more necessary in saving lives,” said Shawnna Rhine, S7HD Community Outreach Coordinator. “We are grateful to the IPHA and IDPH for supporting us in our continued mission to prevent CRC for our residents.”

Recent data shows that death rates from CRC are falling nationwide for those over age 50. This can be attributed, in part, to education and patient participation in early detection of colorectal cancer. Colonoscopies, knowing you family history, and annual screenings with a home test like FIT followed by regular tests as prescribed by your doctor can detect early cancerous polyps to be removed.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends that adults age 45 to 75 be screened for colorectal cancer. The decision to be screened between ages 76 and 85 should be made on an individual basis and discussed with your doctor. When found early, CRC can be prevented and cured with a near 100% effectiveness rate.

To request a free FIT kit from Southern Seven Health Department, call 618-634-2297 or visit www.southern7.org.

Southern Seven Health Department is a public health department that serves communities of the seven southernmost counties in Illinois focusing on disease prevention, promoting healthy lifestyles, ensuring access to healthcare services, and serves as the Head Start Grantee for the region.

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