*“80% by 2018” is a shared goal to have 80% of adults aged 50 and older regularly screened for colorectal cancer by 2018.*

Colorectal cancer screening has been proven to save lives. Clearwater Gastroenterology has made the pledge to help increase colorectal cancer screening rates by supporting the 80% by 2018 initiative, led by the American Cancer Society (ACS), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable (an organization co-founded by ACS and CDC).

Colorectal cancer is the nation’s second-leading cause of cancer-related deaths; however it is one of only a few cancers that can be prevented. Through proper colorectal cancer screening, doctors can find and remove hidden growths (called “polyps”) in the colon, before they become cancerous. Removing polyps can prevent cancer altogether.

“80% by 2018” is a National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable (NCCRT) initiative in which nearly two hundred organizations have committed to eliminating colorectal cancer as a major public health problem and are working toward the shared goal of 80% of adults aged 50 and older being regularly screened for colorectal cancer by 2018. Leading public health organizations, such as ACS, CDC and the NCCRT are rallying organizations to embrace this shared goal.

Colorectal cancer is a major public health problem, and adults age 50 and older should be regularly screened for it, but we have found that many people are not being tested because they do not believe they are at risk, do not understand that there are testing options, or do not think they can afford it. The truth is that the vast majority of cases of colorectal cancer occur in people age 50 and older. Colorectal cancer in its’ early stages usually has no symptoms, so everyone 50 and older should get tested. There are several screening options – even take home options – available. In addition, many public and private insurance plans cover colorectal cancer screening and there may be local resources available to help those that are uninsured.

While colorectal cancer incidence rates have dropped 30 percent in the U.S. over the last 10 years among adults 50 and older, it is still the second leading cause of cancer death in the United States, despite being highly preventable, detectable and treatable. In fact, in 2014 in the U.S., 137,000 cases of colorectal cancer were diagnosed.

Part of the 80 percent by 2018 goal is to leverage the energy of multiple and diverse partners to empower communities, patients, providers to increase screening rates. The 80% by 2018 initiative consists of health care providers, health systems, communities, businesses, community health centers, government, non-profit organizations and patient advocacy groups who are committed to getting more people screened for colorectal cancer to prevent more cancers and save lives.

We are thrilled to join the cause to improve colorectal cancer screening rates. We are asking all member of our community to come together and help us by getting screened and talking to your friends and family who are over 50 years of age about getting screened.