

# Colorectal Cancer Screening Capacity in Montana

## Key Messages

- **2 in 5** Montanans aged 50 to 75 are **NOT** up-to-date with colorectal screening recommendations.
- Only **2/3** of the total **colonoscopy capacity** is currently being used.
- In most of the state, the average wait time to schedule a colonoscopy is **less than a month**.
- Montana Cancer Control Programs can help providers increase the CRC screening rate among their patients.

## Montana Cancer Control Programs

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There are about 500 new cases of colorectal cancer (CRC) in Montana each year and CRC is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most common cause of cancer deaths with 180 deaths each year.<sup>1,2</sup> CRC screening can significantly reduce deaths by diagnosing cancers early and even prevent new cases from developing, yet 2 in 5 Montanans aged 50 to 75 years are not up-to-date with CRC screening.<sup>3,4</sup> Increasing CRC screening rates is a public health priority that requires insurers, healthcare providers, and public health organizations to work together.

## 80% by 2018 in Montana

The American Cancer Society and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are leading a national effort to ensure that 80% of adults aged 50 to 75 are receiving recommended CRC screening by 2018. Hundreds of organizations across the nation have pledged to pursue this goal in their own community. In Montana, the Department of Public Health and Human Services along with 12 other organizations have also pledged to do this.

### Montana organizations that have taken the 80% by 2018 Pledge

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Montana

Central Montana Family Planning

Central Montana Health District

Central Montana Medical Center

Community Health Care Center

Community Medical Center

Kalispell Regional Healthcare

Lewis and Clark Public Health

Montana Cancer Coalition

Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services

Montana Primary Care Association

RiverStone Health

Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council

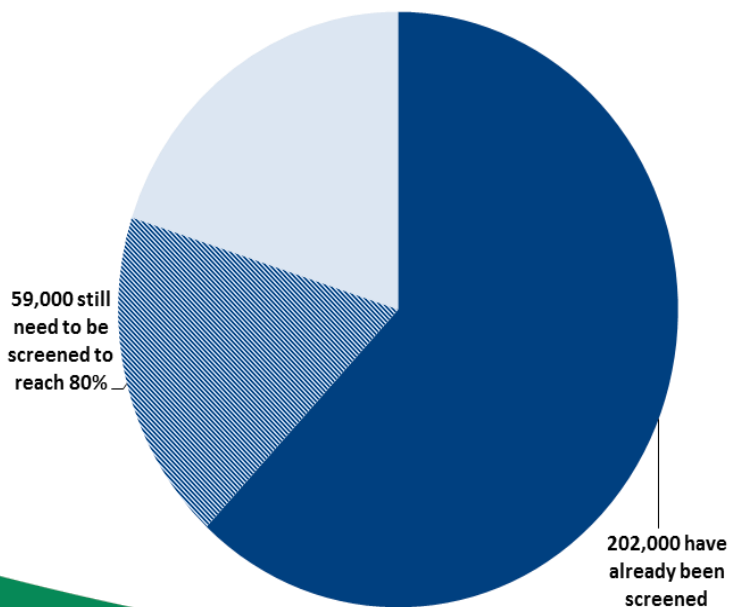
For average risk, asymptomatic adults aged 50 to 75 years, the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommends one of three CRC screening tests:

- Annual screening with high-sensitivity fecal occult blood testing (FOBT)
- Sigmoidoscopy every 5 years with high-sensitivity FOBT every three years
- Screening colonoscopy every ten years.<sup>3</sup>

Sixty-two percent of Montana's 326,000 adults aged 50 to 75 years reported having met USPSTF recommendations for CRC screening in 2014 (Figure 1).<sup>4</sup> Achieving our goal of 80% by 2018 would require about 59,000 more Montanans to get screened.

FIGURE 1

Of the 326,000 Montanans aged 50 to 75, **62% (about 202,000)** were up-to-date on CRC screening in 2014.



Data Source: Montana Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System 2014 data

## Colonoscopy capacity across the state

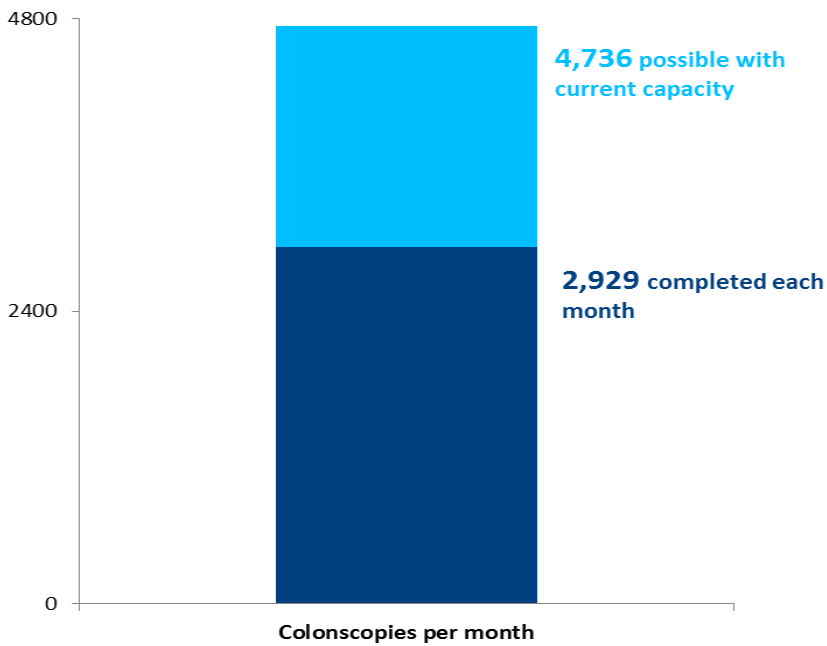
Among Montanans who report meeting CRC screening recommendations, 60% were screened via colonoscopy and only 7% were screened via annual FOBT.<sup>4</sup> Since colonoscopy is a major CRC screening modality and positive FOBT tests require a diagnostic colonoscopy, meeting our goal of 80% by 2018 is highly dependent on adequate capacity to perform colonoscopies across the state.

To assess the current colonoscopy capacity in Montana, DPHHS surveyed health care facilities that performed colonoscopies in the summer of 2016. Forty-three of the 44 facilities surveyed responded to the questionnaire. Thirty-five reported currently performing colonoscopies. All responding facilities reported:

- the average number of colonoscopies completed each month over the past 12 months
- the maximum number of colonoscopies they could complete each month without any added investment of resources, and
- the approximate wait time for a colonoscopy at their facility.

FIGURE 2

Montana healthcare facilities reported using about 2/3 of their total colonoscopy capacity each month.



Data Source: Montana Colonoscopy Capacity Study

Collectively, Montana facilities reported completing almost 3,000 colonoscopies each month (Figure 2). However, only two thirds of the total colonoscopy capacity in the state is currently being used. If all facilities were operating at their full reported capacity there would be an additional 1,800 colonoscopies performed each month. This increase in colonoscopies would be enough to screen an additional 21,600 people each year. That is more than a third of the Montanans that need to be screened in order to reach our goal of 80%.

The reported wait time to schedule a colonoscopy varied widely across the state. However, the majority of regions had an average wait time of less than a month (Figure 3). Even within many regions with a higher average wait time (such as

Missoula, Butte\Silver Bow, Lewis & Clark, and Cascade), there was still at least one facility with a reported wait time of less than a month.

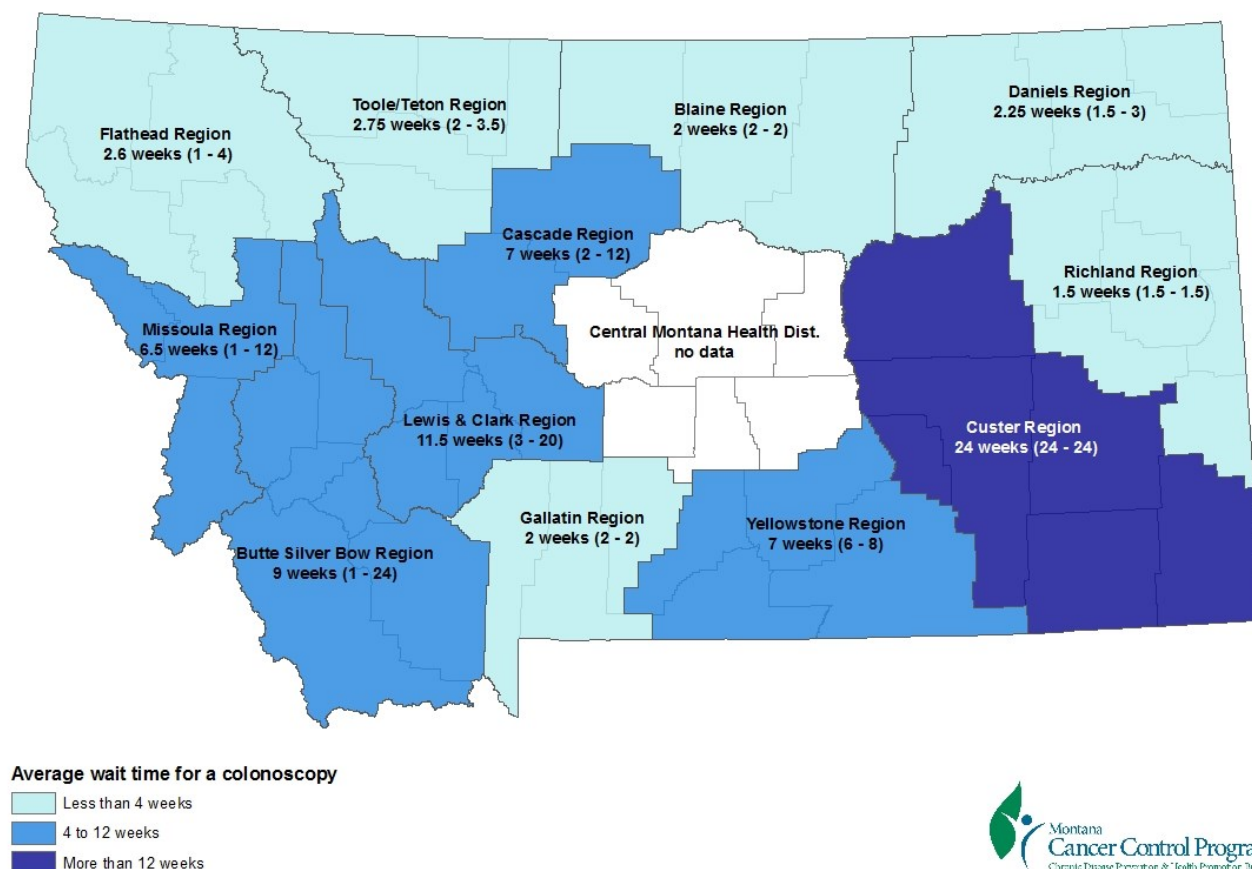
### **Montana Cancer Control Programs can help improve CRC screening rates**

The Montana Cancer Control Programs (MCCP) work with statewide partners, such as medical providers, to implement evidence based policy and system changes. The MCCP is currently working with federally qualified health centers to implement provider assessment and feedback tools and implement client and provider reminder systems.

In partnership with two Montana health systems, MCCP has conducted provider trainings on colorectal cancer screening guidelines and

**FIGURE 3**  
Average Wait Time to Schedule a Colonoscopy by Region

Data Source: Montana Colonoscopy Capacity Study



evidence based interventions. These trainings have addressed CRC office practices and data quality, and office policy and flow for CRC screening and follow-up. The MCCP is particularly interested in conducting similar work with other health systems in Montana over a multi-year period. Interested organizations can contact Leah Merchant at the number below.

The MCCP offers technical assistance to providers and clinics to assess EHR systems and ensure accuracy of colorectal cancer screening data for patient records, screening, follow-up and diagnosis. MCCP welcomes

provider input and inquiries on the topics of provider education, health system change, and EHR assistance for colorectal screening. Contact Leah Merchant, 406-444-4599 or [Imerchant@mt.gov](mailto:Imerchant@mt.gov), for more information.

### References

1. MT DPHHS, Montana Central Tumor Registry, 2006 – 2015.
2. MT DPHHS, Montana Office of Vital Statistics, 2006 – 2015.
3. U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. Final Recommendation Statement: Colorectal Cancer Screening. Accessed on March 6, 2017 at <https://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/BrowseRec/Index>
4. MT DPHHS, Montana Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2014.