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“I’m healthy today,” said Restituto Martinez, of Hastings. “Dedication and love made me change my mind in regards to the colon cancer screening test, which in fact turned out to be positive. I had two colon surgeries done already.”

“We have many men in our health district who, just like Mr. Martinez, are healthier today because they have a team and are practicing prevention,” said Michele Bever, executive director for South Heartland District Health Department (SHDHD).

In recognition of Men’s Health Month, the health department is encouraging men of all ages to take a first step by making an appointment with a health care provider.

Dorrann Hultman, public health nurse with SHDHD, says that “during a health care visit, your doctor can help you address these 3 important questions.”

Hultman says men should ask their health care providers: What is my risk of developing heart disease or having a heart attack; what is my risk for developing cancer; and, what are the most important lifestyle changes I should make to stay healthy?

Heart disease is the #1 cause of death for men in the U.S. “Together with your doctor, you can review your personal and family history and look at your risk,” said Hultman. “Getting your blood pressure and your lab work checked allows you and your doctor to find problems and figure out the best way to fix or treat the problem early.”

Cancers (lung, prostate, and colon) are the #2 cause of death for men in the U.S. according to Dr. Bever. “Your doctor will review your personal and family history of cancer and can help determine which screening tests are right for you and when you should be doing them,” she said.

“It’s important that you follow through and get the cancer screening tests,” said Hultman. “Screenings can catch changes early so that cancers can be prevented. Screenings can also find cancers in the early stages when treatment can be most successful. And, as Mr. Martinez will testify, cancer screenings can and do save lives!”

The health department staff said a doctor can also help men identify areas in their lives where changes can be made and can help them set goals.

“Men might decide with their doctor’s help to set a ‘healthy habit’ goal to reduce smoking or find ways to relax and increase the amount of sleep they get each night,” said Dr. Bever. “But, number one on the list for Men’s Health Month is to schedule that appointment with a doctor.”

Bever said that most insurance covers a yearly preventative wellness visit, but if men have questions they may contact the health department.