

Join Atrium Health Navicent in Observing Esophageal Cancer Awareness Month

Reduce your risk by adopting healthy lifestyle habits

MACON, Ga., April 28, 2021 – The community is invited to join Atrium Health Navicent in observing April as Esophageal Cancer Awareness Month by learning more about the risks posed by persistent reflux and adopting healthy lifestyle habits that may prevent esophageal cancer.

According to the American Cancer Society, 19,260 new cases of esophageal cancer will be diagnosed in 2021. The lifetime risk of esophageal cancer in the United States is about 1 in 125 for men and about 1 in 417 for women. The esophagus is the long, muscular tube that moves food from the mouth to the stomach.

“Unfortunately, the symptoms of esophageal cancer – difficulty swallowing, chest pain, bleeding and weight loss – may only be present after the disease has reached an advanced stage,” said Dr. Jay Anderson, a gastroenterologist practicing at The Gastroenterology Center, Navicent Health.” Major risk factors include chronic tobacco use, chronic alcohol use and acid reflux. To help prevent esophageal cancer, we recommend avoiding all tobacco use and to avoid or minimize alcohol intake.”

An estimated 1 in every 5 American adults suffers from GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease), a chronic condition that can be associated with increased risk of esophageal cancer.

“If a person has chronic acid reflux or has been on chronic acid reflux treatment, it’s best that they consult with a gastroenterologist to determine if they need early evaluation or screening,” Anderson said.

Fortunately, people may take a number of steps to decrease their risk for developing esophageal cancer, including:

- **Avoiding tobacco use** - Tobacco use is the most common lifestyle risk factor for developing esophageal cancer in the United States. Avoiding tobacco use is the first step toward esophageal cancer prevention.
- **Limiting alcohol intake** – Alcohol consumption has been associated with a risk factor for developing esophageal cancer.
- **Seeking treatment for persistent acid reflux** – Persistent acid reflux, or GERD can lead to a condition called Barrett’s esophagus. If left untreated, Barrett’s esophagus can lead to cancer. Heartburn Treatment Center, Navicent Health provides an array of treatment options for those who suffer from GERD.

To find a doctor, visit www.navicenthealth.org and click “Find A Doctor.”

About Atrium Health Navicent

Atrium Health Navicent, the leading provider of health care in central and south Georgia, is committed to its mission of elevating health and wellbeing through compassionate care. Providing more than 1,000 beds and offering care in 53 specialties at more than 50 facilities throughout the region, Atrium Health Navicent provides care for health care consumers’ through an academic medical center; community, pediatric and rehabilitation hospitals; urgent care centers; physician practices; diagnostic centers; home health; hospice and palliative care; and a life plan community. Atrium Health Navicent is dedicated to enhancing health and wellness for individuals throughout the region through nationally recognized quality care, community health initiatives and collaborative partnerships. For more information, please visit www.NavicentHealth.org.