



Grand Council Treaty #3

Office of the Ogichidaa

P.O. BOX 1720
Kenora, Ontario P9N 3X7
Ph: (807) 788-1406
Fax: (807) 548-4776

MEDIA RELEASE

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FIT Kits-on-Hand Launches in Treaty #3 Communities to Improve Access to Cancer Screening

A new health program is helping people in Treaty #3 communities get easier access to colon cancer screening. The Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT), Ontario's recommended screening tool for colon cancer, is now available through a new FIT Kits-on-Hand model. This program is a partnership between Grand Council Treaty #3, Ontario Health – Cancer Care Ontario, and the Northwest Regional Cancer Program.

The FIT is a simple test that checks for small amounts of blood in stool (poop), which may be an early sign of colon cancer or pre-cancerous polyps. Individuals between the ages of 50 and 74 are encouraged to take the test every two years.

Dr. Nicole Zavagnin, Northwest Regional Primary Care Lead, emphasizes the benefits of the test:

“The FIT is easy to use and can be done at home,” says Dr. Zavagnin. “Only one stool sample is needed, and there are no food or medication restrictions. Most importantly, it helps detect colon cancer early, when it is easier to treat.”

Laura Stasiuk, Grand Council Treaty #3 Director of Health, adds that the program is also about breaking down barriers to care.

“Having FIT kits available in our communities removes many obstacles our community members have faced when accessing colon cancer screening, especially those in remote or underserved areas,” says Ms. Stasiuk. “This program also encourages meaningful conversations between community members and trusted healthcare workers, helping more people take that first step toward protecting their health.”

In Treaty #3, barriers like limited access to doctors, long travel distances, and unreliable mail service have made cancer screening harder to access. In the past, individuals needed to visit a healthcare provider to request a FIT kit, then wait for it to arrive in the mail—often a slow and frustrating process.

The FIT Kits-on-Hand model changes this by supplying FIT kits directly to local health centres and nursing stations. Now, healthcare providers can give kits to eligible patients during regular appointments, eliminating the need to wait for mail or travel to another community.

Colon cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer and the second-leading cause of cancer death among Treaty #3 community members, according to the 2018 Cancer Report by Grand Council Treaty

#3. By improving access to screening, GCT3, Ontario Health, and local healthcare partners hope to reduce this trend and save lives.

“When colon cancer is caught early, 90% of people are cancer-free five years after treatment,” says Dr. Zavagnin. “By improving access to screening, we’re helping more people receive timely care and improving community health overall.”

GCT3 leadership is also focused on making the screening process culturally safe and inclusive. Local health champions and trusted health workers are available to provide support and answer questions. The program respects Indigenous values of community wellness and supports a holistic view of health that includes physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

“We are proud to care for each other as a community,” says Ms. Stasiuk. “By offering FIT kits at our local health centres, we are making it easier for people to get screened in a way that honors both their personal health needs and our cultural traditions.”

If you are between the ages of 50 and 74 and have not been screened recently, speak with a healthcare provider at your local health centre or nursing station about getting a FIT kit. Taking this small step can make a big difference in protecting your health.

Learn more about the FIT Kits-on-Hand program or colon cancer screening in Grand Council Treaty #3 [here](#).

-30-

For more information, please contact:

Laura Stasiuk, Health Director – laura.stasiuk@treaty3.ca.