

Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month Social Media Toolkit



March 2017

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ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is designed to help public health professionals establish a Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month social media strategy, manage social media accounts, implement Facebook and Twitter best practices, disseminate Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month messaging and evaluate their social media efforts.

Don't have the time or capacity to implement this toolkit? Don't fret! You can still engage your audience by retweeting messages from [@GWCancer](https://twitter.com/GWCancer)

WHO SHOULD USE THIS TOOLKIT?

Public health professionals, cancer control professionals, coalitions, community-based organizations and stakeholders can all use this toolkit and adapt its messaging for their unique audiences and areas of expertise.

WHAT IS COLORECTAL CANCER AWARENESS MONTH?

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, an annual campaign to raise awareness of the disease and fundraise for research into its cause, prevention, diagnosis, treatment, survivorship and cure as well as to support those affected by colorectal cancer. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), among cancers that affect both men and women, colorectal cancer is the second leading cancer killer in the U.S. (CDC, 2015). Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month begins on March 1st and ends on March 31st.

SOCIAL MEDIA 101

According to a 2014 Pew Research Center survey, "74% of online adults use social networking sites." (Pew Research Center, 2014). In addition, Hughes (2010) found that, "one-third of adults access social media related to health" (p. 3).

Social media represents a unique opportunity to reach a large audience of both consumers and professionals. It is more important than ever that online medical and health information is "trustworthy, engaging, and accessible to digitally empowered consumers" (Hootsuite, n.d., p. 2).

Looking for more in-depth info on social media channels and communication strategy? Check out our [Media Planning and Media Relations Guide](#) or our other [social media toolkits](#).

When designing and thinking about your social media strategy, consider your audience, the channel(s) you want to use, your objective(s), or what you are trying to achieve, as well as how you will measure success. Remember that your social media activities should ultimately support your organization's goals (Hootsuite, n.d.).

Looking to establish a social media strategy for your organization or make the case for why it's important? The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers "[SocialMediaWorks](#)," an online step-by-step tool to create and establish a social media strategy. The site also offers pre-tested and effective messages as well as evaluation strategies, tools and templates.

Remember to tailor messaging to your target audience or audiences. Your organization offers unique strengths and expertise; make sure to capitalize on them to make your campaign effective.



SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Pinterest and more: Social media is growing every day, along with opportunities for outreach.

TWITTER BEST PRACTICES

- Keep Tweets short, between 100-110 characters. This allows other users to Retweet while adding their own comments.
- Add photos or videos. Adding a photo boosts Retweets by 62% on average (Twitter Government and Elections Team, 2014).
- Tweet at author or organizational Twitter handles when possible. Note that Tweets that begin with a username will now reach all your followers (this means you no longer have to use the “.@” convention in order for your Tweet to be seen by all your followers).
- Twitter, Tweetdeck, Sprout Social and Hootsuite all have options to shorten links as you write Tweets. Other options for shortening links are provided under [Additional Tools and Resources](#).
- Promote engagement with other organizations by liking or Retweeting their content. You can even add your own comment before Retweeting.
- Be responsive and recognize Retweets, @ mentions and when others share your content. It doesn't take much, but a simple “thank you” goes a long way toward building engagement.
- Remember that Tweets cannot be edited once they are posted, so proofread before you post!

“CDC uses social media to provide users with access to credible, science-based information...A variety of social media tools are used to reinforce and personalize messages, reach new audiences and build a communication infrastructure based on open information exchange” (CDC, 2015a)

FACEBOOK BEST PRACTICES

- Shorter posts (around 250 characters) get up to 60% more distribution than longer posts (CDC, n.d.).
- Use photos or videos to make your posts stand out. Posts with photos receive up to 50% more likes than non-photo posts (Hershkowitz & Lavrusik, 2013). However, be aware of Facebook's policies about what can be posted and identifying people in photos without consent (CDC, n.d.).
- Use a conversational tone and explain to your audience why the content should matter to them (Hershkowitz & Lavrusik, 2013).
- Posts that start conversations by asking questions and responding receive approximately 70% above-average engagement (Hershkowitz & Lavrusik, 2013).
- Vary your post type. Users don't engage the same way with every post (Hershkowitz & Lavrusik, 2013).
- Track your results and act on them. Facebook offers analytic data that you can use to find out what posts are being “liked” or shared and which ones aren't. Focus your efforts on what is working (CDC, n.d.).

BEST PRACTICES FOR COMMUNICATING ABOUT COLORECTAL CANCER

Screening continues to be a proven tool to reduce the burden of colorectal cancer in the U.S. However, according to the National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable (NCCRT), barriers to screening still remain, including: affordability, lack of symptoms, no family history or personal connection, more pressing health issues, negative perceptions about the test, no regular primary care provider to reinforce messaging or a doctor who does not recommend screening (NCCRT, 2015). Physicians can play an important role in providing health information, while survivor stories make the message personal (NCCRT, 2015).



The NCCRT (2015) found that the most effective messages:

1. "Address misperceptions and fears around the test
2. Feature testimonies from those who have been screened; and
3. Provide patients with the information and knowledge they need, including potential alternative screening solutions, to feel prepared and responsible about the process and results" (p. 13).

When crafting materials and messages to encourage screening, both high and low health literacy audiences benefit from simple messages and illustrations (Meppelink, Buurman, & van Weert, 2015). Consider making your messages and content shareable, as Cutrona et al. (2013) found that many adults are willing to share their screening experiences via email or other e-communication.

MESSAGES SHOULD...

1. Address misperceptions and fears around the test

- Some individuals mistakenly believe screening for colorectal cancer is not necessary unless they are symptomatic or believe that future screening is unnecessary if a previous screen was negative (Weitzman, Zapka, Estabrook, Goins, 2001).
- Individuals may not be aware of or understand the benefits of screening for colorectal cancer (Weitzman et al., 2001).
- Screening technology may also be seen as "messy, ugly or dirty" as well as "undignified" (Weitzman et al., 2001).
- Another consistent barrier to being screened is the misconception that screening procedures are "embarrassing" (Janz, Wren, Schottenfeld, Guire, 2003).
- Unpleasantness and discomfort as well as difficult preparation for screening procedures are cited as additional barriers to getting screened (Weaver, Ellis, Denizard-Thompson, Kronner & Miller, 2015). Messages should have a positive, reassuring tone and emphasize that screening is "worth it" (Weaver et al., 2015).

2. Feature testimonies of those who have been screened

- Using culturally appropriate and diverse testimonials can help reach underserved and underrepresented populations, particularly those with lower screening rates like African Americans (NCCRT, 2015).
- Testimonials with cancer patients can increase perceived severity of colon cancer, which is associated with getting screened (Lipkus, Green & Marcus, 2003).
- Make testimonial messages and information emotionally interesting, or vivid, as this is strongly associated with knowledge and behavioral intention to get screened (Dillard & Main, 2013).

3. Provide information and knowledge, including alternative screening solutions

- Promote multiple screening options such as fecal immunochemical test (FIT), high-sensitivity fecal occult blood testing (FOBT), sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy.
- Highlight screening options that can be done at home to address a variety of barriers (NCCRT, 2015).
- Providing information about affordable screening options can encourage "consumers to take control of their health, while addressing concerns about affordability" (NCCRT, 2015, p. 15).
- Where possible, point consumers to supporting materials, visuals and reliable, accurate sources of information such as trusted websites or physicians.



SAMPLE TWEETS AND FACEBOOK POSTS

Date	Tweets	Facebook Posts	Message Category
Wed 3/1	March is #ColorectalCancerMonth! #ColorectalCancer occurs in the colon or rectum. Read more: http://bit.ly/2fVWYsV	March is Colorectal Cancer Month! Colorectal cancer is cancer that occurs in the colon or rectum. It is the second leading cancer killer in the U.S., but it doesn't have to be. Read more: http://bit.ly/2fVWYsV	3
Thu 3/2	There's more than one way to screen for polyps or #ColorectalCancer: http://bit.ly/2gh6fB4 Talk to your doctor for more info	There are several different ways to screen for polyps or colorectal cancer. Colorectal cancer screening is recommended for men and women aged 50 and older. Talk to your doctor about which test is right for you: http://bit.ly/2gh6fB4	3
Fri 3/3	Screening for #ColorectalCancer saves lives. Learn more from actor Jimmy Smits http://bit.ly/2fVi0ZZ	Screening for colorectal cancer saves lives. It can detect precancerous polyps before they become cancer. Find out why Jimmy Smits got screened and you should too: http://bit.ly/2fVi0ZZ	2
Mon 3/6	Risk factors for #ColorectalCancer include family history, inflammatory bowel disease & certain genetic syndromes: http://bit.ly/2f0ioo3	You may be more at risk for colorectal cancer if you have a personal history of polyps, inflammatory bowel disease, certain genetic syndromes or a family history of colorectal cancer. Read more and talk to your doctor about getting screened: http://bit.ly/2f0ioo3	3
Tue 3/7	Limiting alcohol intake & keeping a healthy weight may lower your risk of #ColorectalCancer. Read more: http://bit.ly/2ezucm4	Leading a healthy lifestyle by limiting alcohol intake and keeping a healthy weight may lower your risk of colorectal cancer. Read more: http://bit.ly/2ezucm4	3
Wed 3/8	@the_NCI's #ColorectalCancer Risk Assessment Tool allows you to estimate your risk for #colorectal #cancer: http://bit.ly/2f4nd2V	The National Cancer Institute's Colorectal Cancer Risk Assessment Tool helps people age 50 and older estimate their risk of colorectal cancer. Calculate your risk and talk to your doctor for more information: http://bit.ly/2f4nd2V	3
Thu 3/9	Did you know? Blacks are more likely to get & die from #ColorectalCancer than any other race/ethnicity, but screening can reduce your risk: http://bit.ly/2f4fr9h	Did you know? Blacks are more likely to get and die from colorectal cancer than any other race/ethnicity. Screening can help reduce disparities. Watch this short video to find out more: http://bit.ly/2f4fr9h	2
Fri 3/10	Listen to @DrFriedenCDC discussing #ColonCancer and the importance of finding it early: http://bit.ly/2fVTzKK	Listen to the CDC Director, Dr. Frieden, discussing colon cancer and the importance of finding it early: http://bit.ly/2fVTzKK There are several life-saving screening options, even at-home tests. Talk to your doctor for more information	3
Mon 3/13	Preventing #ColonCancer or finding it early doesn't have to be expensive. There are simple, affordable tests available. Talk to your doc!	Preventing colon cancer, or finding it early, doesn't have to be expensive. There are simple, affordable tests available. Get screened! Call your doctor today!	1



SAMPLE TWEETS AND FACEBOOK POSTS (CONTINUED)

Date	Tweets	Facebook Posts	Message Category
Tue 3/14	There are several ways to get screened for #ColorectalCancer, including simple take-home options. Talk to your doc about getting screened	Did you know there are several ways to get screened for colorectal cancer, including a take-home option? Talk to your doctor about getting screened.	3
Wed 3/15	Do you know the facts about #ColorectalCancer? Get the basics from @theNCI: http://bit.ly/2fFvBEh	What is NCI working on when it comes to colorectal cancer? Get the basic facts and some info on research that's being done to fight colorectal cancer: http://bit.ly/2fFvBEh	3
Thu 3/16	Most insurance plans and #Medicare help pay for #ColorectalCancer screening for people aged 50 and older: http://bit.ly/2fVmb80	Getting screened for #ColorectalCancer doesn't have to break the bank! Most insurance plans and #Medicare help pay for #ColorectalCancer screening for people aged 50 and older. Find out more: http://bit.ly/2fVmb80	1
Fri 3/17	Recognizing #cancer signs & symptoms & early detection save lives: http://bit.ly/2gh6fB4 #PreventCancer	Can you recognize cancer signs and symptoms? Learn how early detection saves lives and talk to your doctor to decide which screening tests are right for you: http://bit.ly/2gh6fB4	1
Mon 3/20	#Cancer affects some groups more than others. We can spread the word about why it matters: http://bit.ly/2kNnabF #PreventCancer	Cancer continues to affect some groups more than others. Take a moment to get educated about the basics of cancer disparities and why it matters for cancer prevention: http://bit.ly/2kNnabF	3
Tue 3/21	Colorectal #cancer screening saves lives. What you need to know: http://bit.ly/2eb9ZRc #PreventCancer	Colorectal cancer screening can catch abnormal cell changes before they become cancerous. Find out more about screening and talk to your doctor: http://bit.ly/2eb9ZRc	1
Wed 3/22	Joyce from DC says #ColorectalCancer screening is "a small price to pay for enjoying the rest of my life." Read more: http://bit.ly/2f0mtbC	Joyce from Washington, DC says: "In 1992, my husband and sister were diagnosed with colon cancer. They died within four months of each other...I get a colonoscopy regularly. I'm 71 and have had at least four of them. The first two times, I had polyps which were painlessly removed during the procedure. Do I enjoy the prep? No way. But I see it as a small price to pay for enjoying the rest of my life. The procedure itself has always been painless, and afterwards I have gone out with friends to a film or a walk, or gone back to work. I am passionate about people getting a colonoscopy. I check with my friends regularly to see if they are up-to-date on their exams. I don't want to lose anyone else needlessly." Read more personal stories here: http://bit.ly/2f0mtbC	2
Thu 3/23	Colonoscopy isn't the only way to get #ColorectalCancer screening. Read more about your options & talk to your doc: http://bit.ly/2fFu0OR	Colonoscopy isn't the only way to get screened for colorectal cancer. Your doctor can even give you a kit for you to take and use at home! Read more and talk to your doctor: http://bit.ly/2fFu0OR	3



SAMPLE TWEETS AND FACEBOOK POSTS (CONTINUED)

Date	Tweets	Facebook Posts	Message Category
Fri 3/24	Talking to your doctor about #ColorectalCancer screening can be daunting. Here are some questions to ask: http://bit.ly/2fVrXqb	Screening for colorectal cancer is recommended for men and women starting at age 50. Talking to your doctor can sometimes be daunting and confusing. Here is a brochure to help take charge of your health care: http://bit.ly/2fVrXqb	1
Mon 3/27	#ColorectalCancer is 2nd leading cancer killer in the US, but it can be prevented. Talk to your doc about screening: http://bit.ly/2fXqUsd	Why should you get screened for colorectal cancer when you don't have symptoms? The fact is, colorectal cancer doesn't always cause symptoms, especially early on. Find it early by getting screened. Talk to your doctor for more information http://bit.ly/2fXqUsd	1
Tue 3/28	Screening finds polyps so they can be removed before they turn into #ColorectalCancer http://bit.ly/2ghexbZ	If there were a way for you to prevent cancer, would you do it? Colorectal cancer is one you can prevent! Screening finds polyps so they can be removed before they turn into colorectal cancer. Talk to your doctor about screening that's right for you http://bit.ly/2ghexbZ	2
Wed 3/29	#ColorectalCancer screening rates remain low among Asian Americans. Watch this short video for more: http://bit.ly/2f0qhKf	Colorectal cancer screening rates remain very low among Asian Americans. Watch this short video to find out more: http://bit.ly/2f0qhKf	3
Thu 3/30	Look out for your grandparents by making sure they get screened for #ColorectalCancer. Refer them here: http://bit.ly/2eFW2Nc	Your grandparents look out for you. Look out for them, too! Make sure they get screened for colorectal cancer. Refer them here for more information: http://bit.ly/2eFW2Nc	3
Fri 3/31	#ColorectalCancer screening saves lives, but only if you get tested. Listen to this podcast for more: http://bit.ly/2fYJ0bk	Colorectal cancer screening saves lives, but only if you get tested. If you're 50 or older, talk with your doctor about which test is best for you. Listen to this podcast for more: http://bit.ly/2fYJ0bk	3



OTHER IDEAS TO PROMOTE COLORECTAL CANCER AWARENESS

Host or Participate in a Twitter Chat

Twitter chats are a great way to expand your audience and promote engagement with other partners and organizations. You can organize a Twitter chat yourself or simply participate in another one. Twitter chats are live moderated Twitter conversations focused around a specific topic, using a single hashtag. They usually last an hour and involve a list of pre-circulated questions to participants. If you are organizing a chat, reach out to partners early and provide the list of questions as far in advance as possible.

Host a Twitterview

A Twitterview is an interview conducted through Tweets. A Twitterview is a form of Twitter Chat where individuals participate in a live moderated Twitter conversation focused around a specific topic using a single hashtag.

For a Twitterview, typically an interviewer asks questions directly to the interviewee and followers can follow the conversation through an event hashtag. You may also open up the interview to questions from the audience. The benefits of a Twitterview include the creation of relevant and interesting content, dissemination of accurate and evidence-based information, increased visibility of your organization and increased engagement with followers.

Pick a hashtag. Using hashtags is a way to group and organize messages together. In Twitterviews, hashtags are used to distinguish your interview from regular Tweets in the feed. Your followers will also be able to filter and track your Twitterview posts by searching your hashtag. [Symplur](#) amalgamates popular and established Tweet Chat hashtags on health care topics. If you use an established hashtag, your Tweets may reach audiences that you usually do not reach. If you would like to create your own hashtag, make sure it is short and intuitive. Don't be afraid to use abbreviations and acronyms, because your questions and answers including the hashtag must be under 140 characters.

Pick a date and time, then secure a speaker or speakers to be interviewed. Potentially influential speakers might include researchers, cancer survivors or caregivers, health care providers or other subject matter experts. Provide your speaker(s) with a list of what questions will be asked before the event, so they can prepare their answers in under 140 characters, which can take time and editing. Decide in advance whether you are going to open up the interview to your followers and let your speaker(s) know what to expect. Consider using a website to help manage the Twitterview such as [TweetChat](#) or [TWUBS](#).

Promote the event to your followers. Host the event, running it similarly to how you would host a live-in-person meeting (introduce topic, speaker, your organization). Number your questions starting with a "Q" for question. For example: Q1: What should I expect when getting screened for colon cancer? #CRCchat. Your speaker(s) can either "reply" to the question you Tweet or Tweet starting with an "A" and the corresponding number. For example: A1: Prep can be uncomfortable, but hang in there, it's worth it! #CRCchat

Retweet or favorite the best questions posed by your followers and answers by your speaker(s) and be sure to share relevant links and resources. After the event, archive an event summary and share with participants and your other followers. Consider using [Storify](#) to create a visual transcript of the Twitterview.



Best Practices for Engagement Events and Activities

- Plan early and well
- Expand your audience and reach by partnering with another organization
- Make sure you use an original hashtag (unless it makes sense to use an established hashtag)
- Prepare as many questions and responses in Tweet format as possible in advance
- Involving well-known local figures may help raise the profile of your event(s) and increase participation and engagement

MEASURING SUCCESS

Looking to measure the success of your social media campaign? Twitter and Facebook both offer free analytic tools to allow you to demonstrate the impact of your social media efforts.

Twitter Analytics allows you to see and download detailed tracking information about Tweet activity, engagement, audience and trends over time. Log in to analytics.twitter.com/about with your Twitter username and password to learn more.

[Facebook Insights](#) allows users to track page likes, post reach, number of visits, specific posts as well as who is following your page. According to Facebook, “posts that get more likes, comments and shares show up more in News Feed and are seen by more people. Posts that are hidden, reported as spam or cause people to unlike your Page reach fewer people.”

[Klout](#) tracks the influence and reach of your social media profiles and provides a score based on how others are interacting with your content across multiple networks. It also provides information on your top posts so you can see what content is generating action from your networks.

ADDITIONAL TOOLS AND RESOURCES

[80% by 2018: Effective Messaging to Reach the Unscreened 2015 Communications Guidebook](#) from the National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable

[Colorectal Cancer Buttons and Badges](#) from the CDC: Connect visitors on your website or blog to the [What Should I Know about Screening?](#) page.

[Owly](#): Link shortener from Hootsuite

[TinyURL](#): Link shortener that allows for customization of URLs to make them more memorable

[Goo.gl](#): Link shortener that allows for tracking of clicks

[Hootsuite](#), [Sprout Social](#): Online platforms that allow organizations to schedule Tweets and Facebook posts, keep up with their feed (the posts of those they follow), and collect basic analytics for evaluation

[Tweetdeck](#): Platform from Twitter that allows for pre-scheduling Tweets, including pre-loading photos

[Thunderclap](#): Social networking tool that allows you to “crowdsource” your social media campaign to increase its impact

[Periscope](#): Live-streaming video app so you can show events or videos live to your audience on social media



[Klout](#): Service that tracks your organization's level of online social influence

[Canva](#): Allows users to create visually appealing graphics and photos for social media and print materials; includes a collection of low-cost or free stock photos and backgrounds

[CDC Public Health Image Library](#) (PHIL): Free image library. Search "healthy weight," "physical activity" or "nutrition" for relevant results to promote colorectal cancer prevention.

[CDC "photostream" on Flickr](#): Website designed for public image sharing. CDC images include public health photos and graphics developed for public health events that users can comment on and share. Search "colorectal cancer" for relevant results.

[CDC Infographics](#): Gallery of CDC-designed infographics to visually communicate data or information

GLOSSARY

Facebook: A social networking site that allows people to create personal profiles and stay connected with others (www.facebook.com)

Feed: News feeds which you receive straight into your account

Followers: People who have agreed to receive your Tweets or Facebook posts

Hashtags (#): A form of metadata tag that makes it possible to group messages

Retweet (RT): Re-posting of someone else's Tweet

Tweets: 140-character text messages

Twitter: An online [social networking](#) and [microblogging](#) service that enables users to send and read short 140-character text messages, called "Tweets" (www.twitter.com)

Twitter chat: A live moderated Twitter conversation focused around a specific topic using a single hashtag

Twitter handle: Your Twitter name that begins with the "@" sign. For example: @GWCancerInst

Twittersphere or **Twitterverse**: The total universe of Twitter users and their habits

Twitterview: A combination of the terms Twitter, a popular microblogging platform, and interview. It is a type of interview for which the medium restricts the interviewer and interviewee to short-form responses

See Twitter's "[Twitter Glossary](#)" for more.



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