Desperate nurses will next week (April 17/18/19) let it all hang out and bare their naked bottoms to shoppers at a Colchester superstore.

They will wear “bum shorts” provided by the charity Beating Bowel Cancer which include an image of bare buttocks on the back – but it’s all for a serious, sometimes deadly serious, cause.

For the nurses from Essex Rivers Healthcare NHS Trust are desperate to raise public awareness of bowel cancer and between them and surgeon colleague Tan Arulampalam they will staff an information stand inside the foyer of the ASDA superstore from April 17-19.

The nurses are nurse consultant Anna Wordley and colorectal nurse specialists Dawn Stiff and Elizabeth Jeffries.

Ms Wordley, whose own mother died of bowel cancer at the age of 41, said that every April was “Bowel Cancer Awareness Month”.

She said: “As the ASDA store is open 24 hours a day, the information stand will be in the foyer on a 24/7 basis and it will be staffed for most of the time between 9 and 5 during the three days,” she said.

“We’ll be on hand to chat with shoppers, hand out information and also give out free fruit because leading a healthy lifestyle by eating five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, taking plenty of exercise and not smoking will minimise your chances of developing bowel cancer.

“There’s growing evidence that increasing, fruit, vegetables and fibre in our diet can reduce the risk of some cancers, including bowel cancer.

“Fresh fruits and vegetables, especially if eaten with the skin and membranes when appropriate, have more fibre than fruit juice, and salads made from a variety of raw vegetables are higher in fibre than plain lettuce salads.

“One of our key messages will be that although bowel cancer is the second biggest cancer killer in the UK, if diagnosed and treated in time, it is completely curable.”

Ms Wordley, who is based at Colchester General Hospital, said not everyone will have symptoms and the symptoms may vary. The most common ones to look out for are:
• a persistent change in bowel habit, especially going more often or looser for several weeks
• bleeding from the bottom without any obvious reason
• abdominal pain, especially if severe
• a lump in your tummy.

Other symptoms to be aware of include unexplained anaemia, causing tiredness or weight loss.

Ms Wordley said it was important to remember that most of these symptoms will not be cancer. However, if you have one or more of these symptoms for more than four to six weeks, you should go and see your GP.

In the UK, 35,500 people will be diagnosed with the disease this year and around half of these will die. Bowel cancer will affect 1 in 18 of us during our lifetime, and claims 50 lives every day in the UK. In North East Essex, there were 290 newly-diagnosed cases in 2006/2007 and 2005/2006 compared with 240 in previous years.

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