

Wellness Articles

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Breast Cancer Screening

Every October during breast cancer awareness month, women are reminded to get checked for breast cancer. That's because breast cancer is still a problem in Alberta and the most common type of cancer for women. In fact, 1 out of every 8 women will be diagnosed in her lifetime. And each day a woman in Alberta will die from the disease. But breast cancer doesn't have to be a death sentence. If we can catch it early, we can treat it and beat it.

Screening mammograms are a way to do just that. Using special x-rays of the breast that check for signs, they can help find breast cancer 2-3 years before it can be felt by a woman or her doctor. Mammograms are the best test we have for breast cancer, and the only test that has been shown to lower the chance of dying by 30%. Thanks in part to screening mammograms, most women (almost 90%) are now surviving breast cancer.

Should you get a mammogram? Women 50 to 74 should plan to have a mammogram once every 2 years, and can self-refer. Women in their 40's can speak to their doctor, and get a referral for their first screening mammogram.

Screening mammograms are available at many clinics in Alberta. To find the closest screening mammography centre near you, call Health Link at 811 or Screening Programs at 1-866-727-3926.

Screen Test is a service that brings free screening mammograms to rural communities with two mobile clinics. To find out when the next clinic is in your area, call 1-800-667-0604 (toll free).

What else can you do to prevent breast cancer? You can talk to your doctor about your family history of breast cancer and know your risk. Know how your breasts normally look and feel, and get them checked if you find anything unusual. And of course a healthy lifestyle is important. Limiting alcohol, smoking and drinking can also help lower your risk.



Prevention is the best protection. A screening mammogram can save your life. Get a screening mammogram in October.

To find out more about breast cancer screening in Alberta, visit www.screeningforlife.ca.