

Wellness Articles

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Breast Cancer Screening

Breast Cancer Screening Awareness Month is every October, and women are reminded to get checked for breast cancer.

Breast cancer is still a problem in Alberta and the most common type of cancer for women. In fact, one out of every eight 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 can help find breast cancer two to three 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 per cent. Thanks in part to screening mammograms, most women (almost 90 per cent) are now surviving breast cancer.

Should you get a mammogram? Women ages 50 to 74 should plan to have a mammogram once every two years, and can self-refer. Women in their 40s 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 and smoking 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.