Breast Cancer Awareness

Early Detection Saves Lives

It is estimated that one out of every eight women in the United States will develop breast cancer in the course of her life.* Although the number of deaths from the disease has been declining, breast cancer causes more deaths in American women than any cancer other than lung cancer. Early detection is a powerful weapon against the disease. Whether you’re 20 years old or 70, there are steps you can take to detect breast cancer early, giving yourself a better chance of beating the disease.

THREE TYPES OF SCREENING

In its early phases, breast cancer often doesn’t cause pain or easily noticeable symptoms. That’s why it can be so important to check for breast cancer even if you feel fine. According to David Miner, MD, an Obstetrics and Gynecologist at Otsego Memorial Hospital, “Routine screenings make it easier to find and treat breast disease at an earlier stage.”

• **Breast self-exam.** Beginning at age 20, you may consider starting a routine of breast self-exam, which means checking your own breasts and underarms once a month for lumps or changes in size and shape. The more familiar you are with the feel of your natural tissue, the more likely you are to notice changes. Be sure to report any changes to your doctor right away. Dr. Miner adds that developing a routine of self breast exams at an early age enhances later ability to detect early breast disease.

• **Clinical breast exam.** A clinical breast exam is done by a doctor or nurse who uses his or her hands to feel for lumps or abnormalities. Women age 20 to 39 should schedule a clinical breast exam at least once every three years. At age 40, talk to your doctor about beginning a regimen of yearly clinical breast exams.

• **Mammogram.** A mammogram, or X-ray of the breasts, is the best method for detecting breast cancer before there are outward signs. Having regular mammograms can lower your risk of dying from breast cancer. For women age 40 and older, the National Cancer Institute recommends a mammogram every one to two years. Your doctor can help you develop a schedule that takes into account your family history, the findings of previous screenings and your risk factors.**

**ASSESS YOUR RISK**

The two biggest risk factors for breast cancer are beyond your control. These factors are your gender and your age. Breast cancer is one hundred times more common in women than in men, and as a woman ages, her chances of developing breast cancer increase.

Another risk factor is family history. If you have a mother, sister or daughter who’s had breast cancer, your risk of developing the disease is doubled. However, most women who develop breast cancer (85%) do not have a family history of the disease.***

Lifestyle choices also affect your risk. Maintain a healthy weight, stay physically active and limit your alcohol consumption to help reduce your chances of developing breast cancer.

**TAKE THE INITIATIVE**

Being proactive about your health screenings can save your life. At Otsego Memorial Hospital our specialists can help. We provide clinical exams, screenings, diagnostic testing and treatment. To schedule an appointment with Dr. Miner or either of his partners in practice, Lori Burke, MD, or Jessica Kiley, MD, please contact the OMH Medical Group Obstetrics and Gynecology office at (989) 731-2105.

** The National Cancer Institute cautions women to be aware that screening mammography is associated with potential harms such as false-negative or false-positive results, the diagnosis and treatment of cancers that would never threaten a woman’s life and radiation exposure.

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan, in conjunction with Otsego Memorial Hospital, has programs available to enable women who are uninsured or under-insured and fit within specific income restrictions to receive the yearly screening mammograms they need to help protect their health. To find out more about these programs, please contact Joy Klooster at the Health Department of Northwest Michigan at (231) 547-7677 or Christie Perdue at Otsego Memorial Hospital at (989) 731-2342.