



Fort Carson-MEDDAC News

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month Why should I care?

By: Diane Henderson, Population Health Nurse

Life is busy. Every week, there seems to be a new emphasis on some issue. Why should a woman take time to pay special attention to focus on breast cancer? The reasons are multifaceted but can be summed up in one word. Hope.

Surprisingly, Coloradans have a higher incidence of breast cancer than the national average. In 2010, the Susan G. Komen Foundation reported that more than 3,000 women in Colorado were diagnosed with breast cancer. Nearly 500 of them died. The risk increases with age and also includes men. Nationwide, breast cancer kills the population of a city the size of Littleton, Colorado, every year. Forty percent of those diagnosed with breast cancer did not have a mammogram despite the fact that breast cancer continues to be the most common life-threatening cancer diagnosed among women. The tragedy in these numbers is, when diagnosed early, breast cancer patients have a greater than 90 percent chance of survival.

According to the American Cancer Society, in order to maximize the chance of early detection, women age 40 and older should do self-breast exams monthly. As long as they remain in good health, they should also have a screening mammogram and clinical breast exam annually. Women in their 20s and 30s should have a clinical breast exam at least every three years and do self-exams monthly. These self exams should take place one week after their monthly cycle. Individuals at high risk need more frequent exams. Talking to a medical provider will help high risk patients learn more about their screening needs.

The good news is that 80 percent of lumps detected by provider or self-exam of the breast or underarm area are not cancer. However, should a lump be found, consult a care provider immediately to have it evaluated. In addition, should someone find an area of swelling or have an entire breast swell, change shape, begin to pucker or dimple, develop an itchy, scaly sore or rash, become red and warm to the touch, find a nipple begin to invert or develop a discharge, or discover a painful spot that does not go away, see a provider immediately. In addition, understand that pain does not always accompany a lump that can be an early cancer.



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For more information about breast cancer, its risk factors, detection or treatment, please visit Evans Army Community Hospital's information table located outside the chapel on the first floor of the hospital during the month of October. Women who schedule and have a mammogram during Breast Cancer Awareness Month receive a free gift. Beneficiaries do not need to get a referral from their primary care provider. Simply call 719-526-7886 to schedule an appointment. Early detection means hope and mammograms truly save lives.

For more information, visit the American Cancer Society website at www.cancer.org/Cancer/BreastCancer/DetailedGuide/breast-cancer-key-statistics or the Susan G. Komen Foundation website at ww5.komen.org/Breast-Cancer/FactsForLife.html.