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BREAST CANCER AWARENESS October 2015

What is Breast Cancer?

The CDC defines Cancer as “a disease in which cells in the body grow out of control.” (2) The breast is made up of three main parts: glands, ducts, and connective tissue. Sometimes breast cells become abnormal and grow faster than normal cells. These extra cells form a mass called a tumor. Some tumors are “benign,” or not cancerous. Other tumors are “malignant,” meaning they are cancerous and have the ability to spread to other parts of the breast and body and disrupt normal functions in those areas. Breast Cancer is the most diagnosed cancer in women and also their second leading cause of death. According to the National Breast Cancer Foundation, “**Each year it is estimated that over 230,000 women in the United States will be diagnosed with breast cancer and more than 40,000 will die.**” (3)

Symptoms and diagnosis

How can you find out if you have Breast Cancer?

There are several methods available to check yourself for breast cancer.

1. **Breast self-Exam**- It is very important to routinely check your breasts for anything abnormal. The easiest ways to perform a Breast Self-exam is to do the exam in the shower, in front of a mirror, or laying down flat on your back. The Method for a breast exam follows;
 - Using your fingertips, move around your entire breast in a circular pattern. Start from the outside of the breast, and move to the center. Make sure to check the entire breast and armpit area as well.
 - Warning signs of breast cancer include;
 - Lump, hard knot or thickening
 - Swelling, warmth, redness or darkening
 - Change in the size or shape of the breast
 - Dimpling or puckering of the skin
 - Itchy, scaly sore or rash on the nipple
 - Pulling in of your nipple or other parts of the breast
 - Nipple discharge that starts suddenly
2. **Clinical Breast Exam**- If you discover any warning signs from your self-exam, or if you are unsure of your findings, it is crucial to see your health care provider right away. It is helpful to have an experienced professional conduct the self-exam on you because they may notice a suspicious place that you as a patient might fail to notice. The physician can also check your skin and tissue and the texture of your skin.
3. **Mammogram**- Your doctor will perform a mammogram that further examines your breast. A mammogram is an x-ray that allows a qualified specialist to examine the breast tissue for any suspicious areas. The breast is exposed to a small dose of ionizing radiation that produces an image of the breast tissue. Doctors use a mammogram to look for early signs of breast cancer.

Decrease your risk

- Decrease your risk for Breast Cancer by staying on top of your primary prevention habits. Be sure to perform self-exams monthly and report all findings to your health care provider.
- Know your family history of disease. If a family member has been diagnosed with breast cancer your risk of the disease may be higher.
- Manage a healthy weight. Being overweight can increase your risk for breast cancer.
- Exercise regularly. According to the American Cancer Society, “As little as 75 to 150 minutes of brisk walking each week has been shown to lower risk for breast cancer.” (4)
- Limit alcohol consumption

BHB Healthy Woman Program

The Bethlehem Health Bureau has an early detection program called the Healthy Woman Program. It is a FREE breast and cervical cancer early detection clinic. The program performs clinical breast examines, mammograms, pelvic examinations and pap smears. It also provides members of the program with education on how to conduct a breast self-exam, and provides follow-up diagnostic care for those with abnormal results. The Healthy Woman Program is funded by the Department of Health and through grants from the CDC. Eligibility for the program requires members to be women between the ages of 40-64, and annual family income is either at or below 2.50% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines. Women can be under the age of 40 if symptomatic. Women can also be eligible over the age of 64 if they are not enrolled in Medicare or only have Medicare Part A.

To learn more, please call the Bethlehem Health Bureau at 610-865-7083 and ask to speak with someone in the Healthy Woman program or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, or visit:

<http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp/>

(1) *Breast Cancer Awareness*. Gallagher Home Health Services. Web. 21 May 2015.

(2) "What Is Breast Cancer?." *Breast Cancer*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 7 Oct. 2014. Web. 21 May 2015.

(3) "What is Breast Cancer." *Breast Cancer Facts*. National Breast Cancer Foundation, n.d. Web. 21 May 2015

(4) "Four Ways to Reduce Your Breast Cancer Risk." *Breast Cancer*. American Cancer Society, 13 Sept. 2013. Web. 21 May 2015.