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Mt. Pleasant Morning Sun Healthy Lifestyles

Early detection vital to winning breast cancer battle

Stanton~ A staggering 7,000 Michigan women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in 2010, of which 1,350 are not expected to survive. When it comes to winning the fight against breast cancer, early detection continues to be a critical factor.

“I can’t stress enough the importance of routine check-ups and early detection,” said Dr. Robert Graham, Medical Director for the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD). “Those hoping to avoid a cancer diagnosis can greatly increase their odds by conducting monthly breast self examinations and getting appropriate and timely screenings as directed by their doctor.”

In addition to being screened for breast cancer there are four other key ways a woman can reduce her risk of developing breast cancer: control your weight and exercise, know if your family has a history of breast cancer, find out the risks and benefits of hormone replacement therapy and limit the amount of alcohol you drink.

Although every woman is at risk of developing breast cancer, some factors increase a woman’s likelihood of developing the disease. These risk factors include:

- Increasing age
- A personal history of breast cancer
- A family history of breast or ovarian cancer (especially pre-menopausal onset) in a mother, sister, daughter, or other multiple relatives
- High breast tissue density
- High-dose radiation to the chest
- Never giving birth or having a first child after the age of 30
- A long menstrual history

With regular screening, breast cancer is more likely to be detected at an earlier stage, when it is most treatable. “As with any cancer, the sooner it is found the better chance for a cure,” said Dr. Graham. “There is a ninety-five percent survival rate in early, small breast cancers, but early detection is paramount.”

If you cannot afford a mammogram, you may qualify for the Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program (BCCCP), which provides free breast exams, mammograms, pelvic exams and pap smears to women who meet the following criteria:

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2- Breast Cancer

- Have an income \leq 250 percent of the federal poverty level
- Be uninsured or underinsured
- Be between the ages of 50-64

Women who are diagnosed with breast cancer through the BCCCP may be eligible to receive Medicaid for cancer treatment. Since the program began in 1991, over 130,500 women have been screened through the BCCCP with nearly 2,400 breast cancers diagnosed. To find out more information, visit www.michigancancer.org/bcccp or contact your local health department to see if they offer the program.

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