



For **Immediate Release**
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October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Jarilyn Lyons, 68, of Hastings shares her story of being diagnosed with breast cancer at age 50. “Through my 40’s I didn’t always have health insurance. Someone told me about the Every Woman Matters Program (EWM) so I called the number and got signed up.”

Lyons says EWM paid for her yearly well woman exams. “I went in every year in my 40’s but for some reason skipped going in when I was 49. I don’t remember why but I probably thought I was too busy at the time.”

At age 50 she says she had insurance but still qualified for EWM because her plan had a large deductible and she didn’t have money to pay the deductible. “That was the visit I found out I had cancer in my left breast.”

Lyons says she remembers thinking, “If I had just went in last year, it might have been caught earlier.”

Between 2010 and 2014, 70% of female breast cancer cases in Nebraska were diagnosed at an early stage of development. Most national data shows 5-year survival rates for female breast cancer to be nearly 100% for early stage diagnosis. That rate is much lower (27%) for later stage diagnosis.

Breast cancer screening is an important piece in early detection. “All women should discuss breast cancer screening with their provider during yearly well woman exams,” said Dorrann Hultman, public health nurse with South Heartland District Health Department (SHDHD).

“Understanding your personal level of risk for breast cancer can help you and your doctor decide when to begin mammograms and how often you should have them,” she said. “Mammograms can detect breast cancers early, often before they can be felt, and this is when treatment is most successful.”

Local health officials say that the breast cancer incidence rate (rate of new cases diagnosed each year) ranges from 101 to 146 per 100,000 population in South Heartland counties. According to Michele Bever, SHDHD executive director, “this equates to about 4 new cases per year in

Webster County, 4 to 5 new cases per year in Nuckolls County, 9 to 10 new cases per year in Clay County, and 42 new cases per year in Adams County,”

According to the American Cancer Society, breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in women (only lung cancer kills more women each year) and the chance of a woman developing breast cancer in her lifetime is one in eight.

Hultman, says that “women can be proactive about their health by keeping up with annual “well woman” exams and knowing what’s normal for their breast tissue.”

“It’s important for women to understand their personal breast cancer risk factors,” she said, “which include genetics, family history, age, race, personal health history, obesity and alcohol consumption.”

Hultman also encourages women to take the next steps, making necessary lifestyle changes to maintain a healthy weight, be physically active 150 minutes or more each week and limit alcohol. “All of these lifestyle changes can lower the risk of developing breast cancer,” she said.

In addition to knowing your personal risk of breast cancer, Hultman says it is important to know the current breast cancer screening guidelines and recommendations. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) (www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org) and the American Cancer Society (ACS) (www.cancer.org) recommend that women talk to their health care providers to determine the best screening options for them.

To find out if you qualify for Every Woman Matters contact South Heartland District Health Department at 402-462-6211 or 1-877-238-7595.

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