

KDHE Recognizes October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month



The pink breast cancer awareness ribbon is familiar to most people. What may not be as well known is how many lives are affected by breast cancer. An estimated one out of every eight women will develop breast cancer at some point in her life. About 2.5 million women with a history of breast cancer live in the United States, which is roughly equivalent to the entire population of Kansas.

More than 200,000 women in the United States will be diagnosed with breast cancer during 2010 and nearly 40,000 women will die of the disease. In Kansas, 1,916 women were diagnosed with breast cancer in 2007 (the most recent year for which statistics are available). This is more than any other type of cancer except for skin cancer. Breast cancer is second only to lung cancer as a cause of cancer death in women.

The best screening tool for breast cancer is a mammogram. If women choose to have clinical breast exams and to perform breast self-exams, they should also get regular mammograms. Women are encouraged to talk with their health care providers about what screening tests are right for them and when to have them. A woman's chance of survival is best if cancer is detected early, before it spreads to other parts of the body. In fact, when breast cancer is found early the five year survival rate is 98 percent.

Several lifestyle recommendations may reduce the risk of breast cancer. These include avoiding tobacco, staying active, maintaining a healthy body weight, limiting alcohol intake to one or fewer drinks per day, and increasing fiber intake with whole grains, vegetables, and fruits.

KDHE promotes breast cancer screening and provides services for age appropriate, low income, uninsured women through its Early Detection Works program. An estimated 27,000 women in Kansas between the ages of 40 and 64 are eligible for this program, which serves about 6,000 women each year, providing clinical breast exams and mammograms through a network of providers across the state. Should breast cancer be diagnosed through this program, Medicaid through the Federal Treatment Act pays for treatment. For more information about the program, visit www.preventionworkskansas.com . Women seeking these services may call toll free 1-877-277-1368 to see if they qualify.

For more Kansas cancer information and resources, visit www.cancerkansas.org.