

## October is breast cancer awareness month

Breast cancer, once a deadly disease that few women survived is now not only survivable, but can be detected early when it is most treatable and beatable. Screening is easy and painless and takes very little time out of a woman's day.

Breast cancer is the leading cancer killer in Kansas women with 1,815 cases in females diagnosed and 378 deaths. October is breast cancer awareness month, a time to learn more about this type of cancer and what you can do.



Here is what you need to know:

- If you are over age 40, see your doctor to get screened. For women with a family history of the disease screening should begin earlier.
- One out of every eight women will develop breast cancer at some point during her life.
- Seventy-five percent of breast cancers occur in women over the age of 50.
- Regular mammograms can reduce breast cancer deaths by 30 percent.

Every woman is at risk for developing breast cancer and the risks increase with age. About one in eight invasive breast cancers are found in women younger than 45, however two out of three invasive breast cancers are found in women 55 or older. Between 5 and 10 percent of breast cancer cases are believed to be hereditary and the result of gene mutations. White women are slightly more likely to develop breast cancer but African-American women are more likely to die from the disease.

There are ways to help lower the risk of breast cancer. Women should control their weight and exercise, limit the amount of alcohol they drink, know their family history of breast cancer and find out the risks and benefits of hormone replacement therapy. Being aware and informed about your own health and getting screened yearly for breast cancer will reduce your risks and detect cancer early if it occurs.

There are three ways to screen for breast cancer. Women can do monthly breast self exams to check for changes in the size and shape of the breasts, clinical breast exams can be conducted by a doctor or nurse to feel for lumps or other changes in the breast and women can have a mammogram, an x-ray of the breast to detect breast lumps. Breast self-exams should be done every month starting at age 20. Clinical breast exams should be done at least every three years starting at age 20 and should be done yearly by the woman's health care provider beginning at age 40. Mammograms should be done every year starting at age 40. Women under age 40 with a family history of breast cancer should discuss this issue with their physician to determine when and how often to be screened.

More information about breast cancer and screening can be found at:

[http://www.cancerkansas.org/cancer\\_links.htm](http://www.cancerkansas.org/cancer_links.htm)