



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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FIGHT BREAST CANCER WITH EARLY DETECTION

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – This October, the Department of Health is urging all Tennessee women over the age of 40 to get a clinical breast exam and mammogram as part of the observance of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. These tests are the best method for finding cancer early and offering protection against the disease by leading women to get treatment before the cancer is in advanced stages. The survival rate is greater than 95 percent for women whose breast cancer is found at an early stage.

“Breast cancer may be detected at an early stage if women do monthly breast self exams beginning at age 20 and clinical breast exams at least every three years beginning at that age,” said Health Commissioner Susan R. Cooper, MSN, RN. “After age 40 a clinical breast exam should be part of every woman’s annual examination along with a screening mammogram.”

The early signs of breast cancer may include skin irritation, dimpling, swelling, a breast lump, tenderness, nipple changes or pain or an abnormality that is detected on a mammogram. Women should contact their health care provider if any of these symptoms appear, and should follow guidelines for yearly breast health screenings.

“Most insurance policies cover annual mammograms for women, and all women who have Medicare have this as an annual benefit,” said Mary Jane Dewey, director of the Tennessee Breast and Cervical Screening Program. “In spite of this, we estimate that almost 50 percent of women do not get this lifesaving annual test.”

Women are urged to contact their health care provider to schedule an appointment for a clinical breast exam and mammogram. Those without a regular provider may contact their local community health center or county health department for information on screening services.

The Tennessee Breast and Cervical Screening Program is available in most health departments and some community health centers across the state to enroll uninsured women with limited income for clinical breast exams, Pap tests and mammograms at no charge. For more information, call the toll-free number 1-877-96-WOMEN (1-877-969-6636) or visit the TDOH Web site at <http://health.state.tn.us/BCC/index.htm>.

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