



For more information contact:
Toby Wagoner, Public Information Officer
Bureau for Public Health
Telephone: (304) 356-4042

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October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month: Over 1,300 new cases of invasive breast cancer are diagnosed annually in West Virginia

The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Bureau for Public Health is reminding residents that October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a time to encourage regular mammograms and to increase early detection of breast cancer.

State Health Officer and Commissioner for Public Health Dr. Marian Swinker says "There's a good chance that we all know someone that has been affected by breast cancer here in West Virginia. After skin cancer, breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer among women. The West Virginia Office of Epidemiology and Prevention Services reports that there are approximately 1,316 new cases of invasive breast cancer each year in the state. Since breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in women, exceeded only by lung cancer, mammograms and early detection of breast cancer can be lifesaving."

Dr. Swinker says the general guidelines for breast cancer screenings are as follows:

- If you are between the ages of 40 - 49, talk with your doctor about when to start getting mammograms and how often you need them. If you have a family history of breast cancer, share that information with your doctor.
- If you are over age 50, get a mammogram every two years. Talk with your doctor to decide if you need one more often.
- Regularly self-examine your breast for lumps, changes in size or shape of the breast or any other changes in the breasts or underarm (arm pit).

Interestingly, men can get breast cancer at any age although it is most common in men who are between the ages of 60 and 70. For every 100 cases of breast cancer, less than one case occurs in men.

To learn more about breast cancer go to www.cdc.gov/cancer or www.wvcancer.com.