

Parish Nurse Notes

National Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Each year, about 210,000 women are diagnosed with breast cancer.

When breast cancer starts out, it is too small to feel and does not cause signs and symptoms. As it grows, however, breast cancer can cause changes in how the breast looks or feels. Detailed signs and symptoms are located at <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/BreastCancerAwareness>.

The best way to detect breast cancer early, is with a mammogram. A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast. Regular mammograms are the best tests doctors have to find breast cancer early, sometimes up to three years before it can be felt. When breast cancer is found early, many women go on to live long and healthy lives.

If you are a woman age 40 years or older, be sure to have a mammogram screening every one to two years. Call your doctor's office. They can help you schedule an appointment. Most health insurance companies pay for the cost of breast cancer screening tests.

Staying healthy and preventing cancer

Medical experts are still researching how to prevent cancer. The following are recommended to protect your overall health and may help reduce your risk for certain cancers:

- Eating five servings or more of fruits and vegetables each day
- Getting regular physical activity
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Limiting alcohol intake to no more than one drink a day
- Not smoking, or quitting if you do smoke

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health.