

Rural Farm Women At Risk For Breast Cancer

LOU ANN GOOD
Lancaster Farming Staff

LEOLA (Lancaster Co.) — After 32 years of working as a nurse in a doctor's office, Pat Spangler has seen too many women die unnecessarily.

She intends to change that. She said, "Many Amish and Mennonite women don't have annual mammograms. Unfortunately, by the time they have symptoms, the breast cancer has often spread to other organs and is too late to treat."

Breast cancer, Pat said, is a cancer that can be cured when diagnosed early enough.

"Some women think they can't afford a mammogram, but it is offered free or at a low cost to uninsured or underinsured women," Pat said.

The free service is available through the American Cancer Society.

According to Pat, one out of every 8.2 women will develop breast cancer at some point in life, based on full life expectancy.

The average age of women diagnosed with breast cancer is 60 years. But that doesn't mean younger women do not need regular check ups.

For most types of breast cancer, the cause is unknown. But women whose mothers or other family members have had breast cancer are more disposed to develop it. These women should have regular checkups from age 20.

Risks increase if a woman has started menstruation before age 12 or menopause after age 55. No pregnancies or a first pregnancy after age 30, and radiation exposure also increases the risk.

Research also shows that breast cancer is more likely to develop in women whose diets are high in fat.

On Feb. 15, 7 p.m., Pat and a group of health-care volunteers will teach a Breast Cancer Awareness Program at the Bareville Firehall, 211 E. Main St., Leola.

Topics discussed include risk factors of breast cancer, the value of regular checkups, services available through the American Cancer Society, the importance of mammography and self breast exam methods. An educational film will illustrate normal and abnormal mammograms.

Although it is important for women to do regular self-breast exams, "Often a mass is picked up by a mammogram that could never be detected by self examination," Pat said.

Information includes facts that many women aren't told. For example, women should not drink caffeine before a mammography or schedule it before menstruation. Both may cause fluid retention and prevent detection.

The program is free and free transportation is also available. The program is open to all regardless of where they are living.

Pat also provides the same program to women's groups whenever requested.

She said, "The American Cancer Society has so much information available for all types of cancers. They also have support groups and will team up a



To prevent unnecessary suffering and death from breast cancer among rural women, Pat Spangler presents educational seminars, which includes emphasizing that free mammograms and follow-up care are available to uninsured and under-insured women.

cancer patient with a recovered patient."

If a women is diagnosed as having a breast mass or other abnormality, funding for surgery and health care is also available through the American Cancer Society.

For more information or if

transportation is needed to attend the awareness program, call Pat at (717) 656-6122 or (717) 687-7434.

"Awareness and early detection are the best defense against breast cancer," Pat said. "Come and bring a friend. It could save your life."

Exercise Facts

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.)—If getting into a regular exercise program was your New Years' resolution, this information may provide even more incentive.

Benefits of Exercise

Individuals who do an aerobic (oxygen using) activity at least three times a week for a minimum of 20 to 30 minutes may benefit from these physiological changes in the body:

- Increased stroke volume—the heart can pump more blood with each contraction.
- Increased ability of the body to carry oxygen to the working muscle.
- The heart is able to rest more between each beat.
- Good cholesterol or (HDL cholesterol) may actually increase.
- Decreased blood pressure in some people.

For persons who are sedentary, any increased level of exercise or physical activity is beneficial.

Aerobic Advantages

For an exercise to be aerobic, it must:

- Use large muscle groups.
- Be maintained continuously for a minimum of 20 minutes.
- Use heart and lungs.

Aerobic activities include walking, swimming, jogging/running, bicycling, aerobic dancing, rowing, jumping rope, stair climbing, and cross country skiing.

Getting Started

Some things to remember if you're new to exercising:

- First, see your doctor for a complete physical exam.
- Choose an aerobic exercise program to maximize health benefits.

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