



BREAST AND CERVICAL CANCER

Upper Peninsula Health Plan would like to provide you with some facts about Breast and Cervical Cancer. These are two of the most common cancers women can get. Without screening tests, many women often won't know they have these diseases until they are in their advanced stages. It is very important to have these screening tests. Both of these cancers are almost 100% curable, if found early.

BREAST CANCER

Every woman is at some risk for getting breast cancer. Most women with breast cancer have no known risk factors at all. *All women should do monthly self-breast exams.* You will know your breasts better than anyone and can check for any unusual changes.

Be sure to see your doctor for the following:

- If you find a lump, thickening, or a breast that changes shape.
- Dimpling, puckering, or retraction of the skin.
- Breast tenderness or pain that lasts most of the time.
- Nipples that become drawn into the chest, change shape, or become crusty from a discharge.
- A nonmilky discharge when you squeeze the nipple of either breast.

ALSO, it is very important, as you get older, to have routine mammograms (a x-ray of your breasts) to help screen for problems. The test only takes seconds. If there is a cancer, it can be caught early and treated early!

Currently (July 2001 report) the National Cancer Institute estimates that 1 in 8 women in the United States will develop breast cancer during her lifetime. **Increase in age is the biggest known risk factor known for getting breast cancer.** *Early detection is the key!*

You should have your first mammogram between ages 35 and 40 years of age. Women 40s or older should get screening mammograms on a regular basis, every one to two years. Please, discuss your risk factors with your doctor and ask for his/her advice on how often you should have a mammogram and, if you need one, ask them to schedule one!

Over...

CERVICAL CANCER

Cancer of the cervix (the lower part of the uterus) can occur at any age. Cervical Cancer does not form suddenly. It is a slow growing cancer with few symptoms to let a woman know that she has it. **If cervical cancer is found early enough, most women will survive this disease.**

Some Increased Risks of Cervical Cancer:

- Having a history of venereal warts (human papilloma virus).
- Having had frequent sexual intercourse before age 18.
- Having unprotected sex at *any* age.
- Having had multiple sexual partners. The more partners, the greater the risk.
- Having sex with partners who themselves:
 - began having sexual intercourse at a young age;
 - have had many sexual partners; or
 - have had sex with another woman with cervical cancer. (This is how the human papilloma virus passes from person to person.)
- Poor dietary habits.
- SMOKING.
- The greatest risk: **HAVE NOT HAD A PAP TEST** - which might detect pre-cancerous changes!

The **best** way to find this cancer early is to have pelvic exams with **pap tests** on a regular recommended basis. **A woman should start having this exam and test done when she begins having sex, or, is over 18 years of age.** IF, you haven't already talked to your doctor about any of the above risk factors, please do so. If you haven't had your yearly pap test, call to schedule one **today.**

Upper Peninsula Health Plan urges you to schedule these routine tests. They are part of **your** benefits. We can help with transportation if you need it. Don't delay. You may save a life. Your own!

PREVENTION IS THE BEST MEDICINE!

These facts and recommendations are based on data from the American Cancer Society, the National Cancer Institute, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.