

Health Link

Breast Cancer Screening Sees What You Can't

It's hard to believe, but an estimated 22,700 women and 200 men in Canada will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year.

In Muskoka, cancer care and breast cancer screening are close to home.

Services are available at your local hospitals that help detect breast cancer and treat it.

Breast cancer is the most common type of cancer in women and tends to occur earlier in life than other cancers. There is no single cause of breast cancer, but factors such as age, family history of cancers, previous breast disorders and even hormone replacement therapy appear to increase the risk of developing it, according to the Canadian Cancer Society.

But you can take measures to reduce your risk by following breast cancer screening guidelines.

Breast cancer screening is routine testing aimed at detecting breast cancer at earlier stages of the disease when you don't have any symptoms. Regular breast cancer screening can detect early signs of breast cancer, including tumours that are too small to feel.

Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) is a designated Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) site under Cancer Care Ontario, providing breast screening services at the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital Site in Bracebridge.

The OBSP screens women who are 50 years of age and older free of charge using mammography, an examination of the breast using a low-dose x-ray. OBSP sites also provide recall and follow-up services and help women with abnormal results to move through the diagnostic phase once they have registered with the program.

"Regular breast cancer screening saves lives," explains Dr. Jack McCann, a radiologist at MAHC. "Breast cancer is the most common cancer in Canadian

women, affecting one in nine in their lifetime. It is critical for women over the age of 50 to get regular mammograms to find breast cancer earlier when there are more treatment options, a lower likelihood of the disease to spread and an improved chance of survival.”

Mammography is also available at the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital Site using our digital mammography unit.

Although film-based mammography imaging is safe, digital imaging reduces the radiation output, and gives the radiologists more tools for manipulating and magnifying the images.

Fundraising for this state-of-the-art continues with the generous support of the community through the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital Foundation and Huntsville Hospital Auxiliary.

Having such sophisticated equipment improves our ability to screen for cancer and produces better images that offer improved accuracy.

In Muskoka, roughly 23 per cent of the population are women over the age of 50 and with approximately 5,800 mammograms completed annually by MAHC, the need for such equipment at both hospitals is ever increasing, especially as technology advances.

You can help make this \$500,000 wish for a new digital mammography unit at the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital Site a reality and help put women’s health at the forefront.

Health Link is an awareness column brought to you on behalf of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare.