

a healthy conversation

Take Charge of Your Breast Health *October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month*

From Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month (NBCAM). Breast cancer is the second most common cancer among American women. Men are also susceptible to breast cancer, but it is not as common. For every 100 diagnoses of the disease, less than one occurs in men.

Breast cancer is too small to feel and does not cause signs or symptoms when it starts out. As it grows, however, it can cause changes to how breasts look and feel. A new lump in the breast or underarm is a common indicator. Other symptoms may include pain in any area of the breast, irritation or swelling of breast skin, changes in appearance of the nipple area and a thickening or swelling in part of the breast.

There are numerous, simple ways both women and men can lower their risk of breast cancer:

- Control your weight and exercise regularly.
- Know your family history of breast cancer. If your mother, sister, or daughter has been diagnosed, speak with your doctor about your risk of the disease and how you can lower that risk.
- Learn the pros and cons of hormone replacement therapy.
- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink.
- Speak with your doctor about scheduling a screening mammogram if you are over 40 years of age.

“Regular mammograms are the best way to find breast can-

cer early, sometimes even up to three years before it can be felt,” says Dr. Timothy Gusthall, Wellmark’s vice president and chief medical officer.

A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast; you can most likely get a screening mammogram at a clinic, hospital or doctor’s office. If you are 50 to 74 years old, make sure to have a mammogram every two years. If you are over 40, consult with your doctor on when and how often to have a mammogram.

If you have questions about breast cancer signs, symptoms or need help finding a physician or mammography clinic, call the Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield Personal Health Assistant 24/7 at 1-800-724-9122.

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