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October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Take time to educate, participate, and encourage yourself and others

Each year, October brings breast cancer to the front and center. Breast Cancer Awareness Month provides opportunities to promote screenings and the warning signs of this life-threatening disease. In addition, the Grand Traverse County Health Department (GTCHD) and the Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance (NMPHA) recognize Oct. 13 as Metastatic Breast Cancer Awareness Day and Oct. 17-23 as Men's Breast Cancer Awareness Week.

Did you know that:

- One in eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime. According to the Susan G. Komen organization, one woman is diagnosed every two minutes in the U.S.
- The two most common risk factors of breast cancer are being born a female and getting older.
- In 2022, an estimated 44,000 people in America died from breast cancer.

GTCHD helps women and men be proactive in fighting breast cancer through education, awareness, and screenings.

"The Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Navigation Program (BC3NP) is an invaluable program that ensures equitable access to screening for not just one, but two preventable cancers," said Medical Director Najibah Rehman, MD, MPH. "Even one prevented case of breast or cervical cancer can have a huge impact on an individual and their family, where we should not be losing people to these diseases today."

The program covers pap smears for women 21 to 64, mammograms for women 40-64, and MRIs based on personal and family risk. Over 75 services are provided through BC3NP, including:

- Diagnostic mammograms,
- Ultrasounds, and
- Breast biopsies.

"I love being able to provide this program to our clients," said GTCHD Nurse Practitioner Kelly Gingras. "We enrolled 12 women this year alone."

Of those 12 individuals, four were under 40, underscoring the importance of comprehensive interviews and exams to identify cases in younger individuals that may not yet meet standard age-based screening recommendations.

To see if you qualify for BC3NP or a type of insurance that can help cover screenings, call GTCHD staff at 231-995-6113. To learn more about the symptoms of breast cancer, go to https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/basic_info/symptoms.htm.

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