

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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Charge Into the New Year with a Cancer Check Up!

Coldwater, MI. Start off the New Year the right way! Regular health exams and tests can help find problems before they start. Each year, on average, an estimated 330 people in Branch, Hillsdale and St. Joseph Counties die from cancer and another 765 are newly diagnosed. The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency is encouraging the following key, age-specific cancer screenings to prevent premature death and disability associated with cancer. Remember, cancer, in many cases if caught early, can be treated and cured.

- **Breast Cancer Screenings:** Breast cancer is the most common type of cancer found in women and the second leading cause of cancer deaths for women. There are three different breast cancer screenings women should consider:
 - Routine breast exams: a self-exam that should be performed on breast and arm pit tissue on a monthly basis.
 - Annual clinical exams: a clinical breast exam performed annually by a physician or nurse.
 - Mammograms: Mammograms, which is an x-ray of the breast done bi-annually for women who are between the ages of 50 to 74 years.
- **Cervical cancer screenings:** Cervical cancer used to be the leading cause of cancer death for women in the United States but has decreased due to an early screening called the Pap test. The Pap test checks for changes on the cervix that might become cancerous. This test is recommended for all women between the ages for 21 and 65 years and can be done as part of a regular physical exam in the physician's office. Another screening, the HPV test, screens for the Human papillomavirus (HPV), which is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States. Some strains of HPV had been associated with cervical and other cancers. HPV can now be prevented through a vaccine, which is recommended for preteen boys and girls at age 11 or 12 so

they are protected before ever being exposed to the virus. The health department offers this immunization for free to those who are covered by Medicaid, are uninsured or lack vaccine coverage. Call to schedule an appointment.

- Colorectal cancer screenings: Overall, the lifetime risk of developing colorectal cancer is about 1 in 20. Colorectal cancer almost always develops from *precancerous polyps* (abnormal growths) in the colon or rectum. Screenings can find the precancerous polyps, which means they can be removed before they turn into cancer. Regular screenings, using high-sensitivity fecal occult blood testing, sigmoidoscopy, or colonoscopy should begin at age 50 and continue until age 75, and are key in colorectal cancer prevention.
- Prostate cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in men. One in seven men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer. There are two types of screening: a digital exam and the Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) blood test. As a rule, the higher the PSA level in the blood, the more likely a prostate problem is present. Always consult with a physician about screening results.
- Skin cancer screening: Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States. Be sure to report any atypical moles or skin abnormalities to a physician and have them test it to identify any precancerous or cancerous cells.

Being mindful of these screening tests and when to have them can protect your health and help you enjoy life for many years to come. Be sure to discuss these screenings with your physician.

If you lack health insurance and need assistance in signing up for an insurance policy that can assist you in paying for these medical screenings, please contact the health department's navigators at 269-273-2161, ext. 0104# or 0337#. Let's make 2016 the healthiest New Year so far!

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