

Corner Brook Status of Women Council

NEWSLETTER - October 2020

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Have you or someone close to you been diagnosed with breast cancer? If yes, you have expertise to share with all of us, but please keep reading. If not, perhaps this newsletter feature will contain information that may be helpful to you or someone you hold dear.

Women are encouraged to get to know their own breasts. Be breast health aware. How do your breasts look and feel to you? Look in the mirror. Do you see changes such as puckering, dimpling, skin changes, or nipple discharge? Now, get to know the texture of your breasts. Breasts are not all completely smooth. There are textures within breast tissues that are a normal part of the inside anatomy of the breasts. For example, there are ducts and lobules in women's breasts. They help us breastfeed our babies.

When you are having a bath or shower is a good time to get to know the look and feel of your breasts. You may notice a change in how your breasts feel before your period. For example, hormones may make your breasts feel more heavy, lumpy, and tender. If so, check again after your period is finished to see if it persists. When women get to know the textures and look of their breasts, it can help them know when something changes. If you do notice a change and it persists it is important to call your healthcare provider (doctor or nurse practitioner).

Your healthcare provider may examine your breasts and order a mammogram. Some women will need an ultrasound too. After these types of tests are completed, you may need a biopsy done. Many procedures can be done in the x-ray department including some biopsies. A change in the texture or look of your breasts does not mean that you have breast cancer. Women develop problems such as benign lumps and abscesses, not only breast cancer.

A screening mammogram may help detect a very small change such as a clump of calcium deposits in the breast before it becomes a lump that the woman can feel. Women between the ages of 50-74 years can participate in the breast screening program. Eastern Health runs the breast cancer screening program at three sites: Corner Brook, Gander, and St. John's. The program also offers education on breast health and support such as where to turn for help if your mammogram result is abnormal. Information and education can be found on the website.

A diagnostic mammogram is used to check for breast cancer when a woman feels a lump or has some change in the breast that is concerning.

The Canadian Cancer Society (CCS) also offers education and support. The CCS has a website and a toll-free information line where people can call in and request information and receive support. and the toll-free number is: 1-888-939-3333. Also, the provincial office is located in St. John's. You can call toll-free at 1-888-753-6520.

The decision to participate in breast cancer screening is a personal one. There are benefits and harms to screening. For example, a woman may get a false positive test result but not have cancer. It is important to discuss screening with your health care provider so that you can have information and make a

decision that feels right for you (Breast Screening Program, Eastern Health).

Breast cancer is diagnosed in younger women as well as mid-life and older women. If you are younger than the age range for the breast screening program, discuss with your health care provider whether earlier screening might be right for you. The Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care, Eastern Health Breast Screening, and the Canadian Cancer Society contain information that you may find very helpful.

If you find a lump, or notice a change in the look or feel of one or both of your breasts, you should contact your healthcare provider.

The waiting to receive a test result is usually a very worrisome time. If you have questions, concerns, or would like to have someone to talk to, please reach out to someone and contact your healthcare provider.

If you or someone close to you is diagnosed with breast cancer, you may find it difficult to take in all of the information because it is such a stressful time. You may find it helpful to have someone attend the medical appointment with you and make notes or quietly listen and help you remember later all that was said at the appointment.

You may be asked to make decisions such as whether you would like to have a lumpectomy + radiation or a mastectomy. Some women need radiation even after a mastectomy. The medical decision depends on the size of the cancer and if lymph nodes tested positive for cancer. Surgery and radiation are local treatments. Chemotherapy, hormonal therapy, and specific treatments such as Herceptin are systemic therapies. They travel throughout the bloodstream. The recommendations for treatment depend on each woman's medical situation. Some women may need very little

treatment and many other women may need a variety of treatment.

In summary, it is recommended that you become breast self-aware and contact your healthcare provider if you have any concerns. Further information can be found at:

Eastern Health's Breast Screening Program (offered throughout the province):
<https://cancercare.easternhealth.ca/prevention-and-screening/breast-screening-program/>

the Canadian Cancer Society:
<https://www.cancer.ca/>

the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care
<https://canadiantaskforce.ca/guidelines/public-health-guidelines/breast-cancer-update/>

Submitted by Judy Strickland RN MN CON (C) & Lori Wellman RN BN

Upcoming:

October is both Breast Cancer Awareness month, Autism Awareness month and Women's History month in Canada.

Friday, October 2nd - International Day of Non-violence- Celebrated on Mahatma Gandhi's birthday, the day is recognized to reaffirm the universal relevance of the principle of non-violence and the desire to secure a culture of peace, tolerance, understanding and non-violence.

Monday, October 5th - World Habitat Day. This year's theme is Housing For All — A Better Urban Future. Having an adequate home is always important and during covid it's a matter of life and death.

October 5th to 10th - HPV Prevention Week - a series of events and initiatives to increase awareness of an **infection** that is estimated to affect more than 75% of sexually active people in their lifetime.

Saturday, October 10th -World Mental Health Day - The Day provides an opportunity for all stakeholders working on mental health issues to talk about their work, and what more needs to be done to make mental health care a reality for people worldwide.

Monday, October 12th - Thanksgiving - We hope you all enjoy turkey and time with loved ones. Our office will be closed for the day on Monday, reopening Tuesday, October 13th.

Saturday, October 17th - International Day for the Eradication of Poverty - Presents an opportunity to acknowledge the effort and struggle of people living in **poverty**, a chance for them to make their concerns heard, and a moment to recognize that poor people are the first ones to fight against **poverty**.

Sunday, October 18th - Person's Day - Marks the day in 1929 when the historic decision to include women in the legal definition of "persons" was handed down by Canada's highest court of appeal.

Saturday, October 31st - Halloween - Thousands of little fingers are crossed that this very special Saturday night halloween, that only happens once in a blue moon ;) will go ahead. If not, treat your little ghost or goblin to *It's the Great Pumpkin*, *Charlie Brown* and they can commiserate with other halleweens that didn't go to plan.

The Final Word:



This year has been plagued by loss - lives, jobs, industries, homes, forests, safety, security and faith. However, it is the loss of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, that lead me to put my head in my hands and weep.

A beacon for the powerless masses, she spent her life passionately fighting, not only for women, but also for the 2SLGBTQQIPAA community, undocumented people, disabled people and expansion of voting rights. Her work long predates her appointment to the supreme court (where she was the second woman and first ever jewish person appointed) and will continue in her memory for many generations that will follow.

May her memory be a blessing and may the beacon that she lit sustain us who are left to battle on. Remember, despite this loss do not lose hope because "real change, enduring change happens one step at a time".