

It's Fall! Think Pink!!

By: Kathy Woodham

October is a beautiful month full of crisp air, swirling leaves, and colorful hues of orange, yellow, red and yes, even pink! To recognize National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, October is also known for pink—pink ribbons, pink T-shirts, pink jewelry, even many water fountains flow a bright pink to raise awareness of the importance of mammograms to screen for breast cancer.

For most women, there is one major concern especially when talking about the leading health issues facing women – breast cancer. National statistics show that about 1 in 8 U.S. women (just under 12%) will develop invasive breast cancer over the course of her lifetime. With breast cancer the second leading cause of death in women between the ages of 40 and 55, all women over 40 should be screened annually.

- According to the American Cancer Society, in 2017, it is estimated that among U.S. women there will be 252,710 new cases of invasive breast cancer and 40,610 breast cancer deaths.
- Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in women. (Only lung cancer kills more women each year.) The chance that a woman will die from breast cancer is about 1 in 36 (about 3%).
- For women at average risk of breast cancer, recently updated American Cancer Society screening guidelines recommend that those 40 to 44 years of age have the option to begin annual mammography; those 45 to 54 years of age should undergo annual mammography; and those 55 years of age and older may transition to biennial mammography or continue annual mammography. Women should continue screening as long as their overall health is good and they have a life expectancy of 10 years or more. It is especially important that women are regularly screened to increase the chance that a breast cancer is detected early before it has spread. Women who are at higher risk of developing breast cancer may begin screenings earlier.
- If a woman is under 50, has a family history of breast or ovarian cancer, finds a lump while doing a breast self-exam, or has nipple changes, she should see her doctor for a clinical breast exam and a referral for a diagnostic mammogram, even if she had a screening mammogram the previous year.
- All women should be familiar with the known benefits, limitations, and potential harms linked to breast cancer screening. They also should know how their breasts normally

look and feel and report any breast changes to a health care provider right away. Breast self-exams should be performed monthly.

- Women 20-39 should obtain a clinical breast exam by a healthcare professional every three years and perform monthly breast self-exams.
- Women should know how their breasts normally look and feel and report any breast changes to a health care provider right away.
- Breast cancer occurs more frequently in women, however men can and do develop breast cancer.
- Contact the Polk County Health Department at (828) 894-8271 for information on health prevention screenings available. The health department is located at 161 Walker Street in Columbus, with hours from 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m., Monday-Friday.
- St. Luke's Hospital provides digital mammograms in a calming sensory-suite environment, using sight, smell and sound. To schedule an annual mammogram, call St. Luke's Hospital's Radiology Department at 894-3525 ext. 3590. Everyone who receives a mammogram at St. Luke's Hospital's during October will receive a free gift and will be entered to win a beautiful gift basket filled with lots of pink surprises!
- St. Luke's Hospital Infusion Center offers a new service for women and men undergoing treatment for cancer. Under the direction of oncologist Matt Rees, MD, the new chemotherapy and IV infusion center is a member of the Levine Cancer Institute of Charlotte, world-renown for research and treatment. For more information, please call (828) 894-0111.

A longtime member of Polk Fit, Fresh, Friendly, Kathy Woodham is director of Marketing/Public Relations for St. Luke's Hospital. St. Luke's Hospital is a private, not for profit, community hospital that provides immediate access to high quality emergency, acute medical /surgical and geriatric care. St. Luke's provides diagnostic and medical services using the latest technology and the greatest compassion for its patients and families. Using the healthcare industry's best practices, St. Luke's Hospital is focused on patient safety, high quality care and excellent patient satisfaction, consistently meeting or beating national standards in place for hospitals across the country. Fully accredited by The Joint Commission, St. Luke's Hospital is also monitored by the Centers for Medicare/Medicaid Services, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality and, most importantly, by our patients through a nationally standardized satisfaction survey. With an all-volunteer Board of Trustees who live in Polk County, St. Luke's Hospital is dedicated to providing exceptional care close to home. For more information on Polk Fit Fresh and Friendly and our work in the community and a list of our meeting dates, please visit our website at www.polkfitfreshandfriendly.org.

