

Aboriginal Cancer Care Unit

Honouring the **Aboriginal Path** of Well-being

NEWSLETTER • October 2007

Breast Health: What Every Woman Should Know

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in First Nations women in Ontario but if found early, women have better treatment options available to them and have a good chance their breast cancer can be cured. In fact, more than 95% of women are alive and well five years after early detection and treatment of breast cancer.

Screening for breast cancer involves having a breast X-ray (mammogram) and a physical exam of your breasts by your doctor or nurse. Women aged 50 and over should generally have a mammogram every two years.

Although there are few, if any obvious signs of breast cancer at the earliest stages, a mammogram can find most breast cancers when they are as small as a grain of rice. That's why it's so important for Aboriginal woman over 50 to have a mammogram even when you feel healthy.

Where you can go for breast screening

The Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) is a program of Cancer Care Ontario providing top quality breast screening services for

women 50 years of age and older.

Having a mammogram at an OBSP site is free-of-charge and you can book your own appointment by calling toll-free at 1-800-668-9304 or by visiting www.cancercare.on.ca.

Breast Health Checklist:

- ✓ If you are 50 and older, talk to your doctor or community health worker or call OBSP to make your own appointment for a mammogram.
- ✓ It is important to know how your breasts normally look and feel so you are aware of any unusual changes. If you find any changes see your doctor or nurse right away.
- ✓ Have a physical breast exam by a doctor or nurse as part of your regular annual health check-up.
- ✓ If you are 40-49 years old, talk to your doctor or nurse about your own personal risk of breast cancer and the benefits and limitations of mammograms so you can make the best decision for yourself.



The OBSP Mobile Coach Unit services women who live in remote areas in North Western Ontario.



A Registered Radiology Technologist examines a digital mammography image.

Feature Recipe

Bran Bannock

500 ml (2 cups) flour (half whole wheat and half white)
2.5 ml (1/2 tsp) cream of tartar
15 ml (1 tbsp) non-hydrogenated margarine
250 ml (1 cup) bran
5 ml (1 tsp) baking soda
250 ml (1 cup) buttermilk or sour milk *

*To make sour milk, add 10 ml (2 tsp) of vinegar or lemon juice to 250 ml (1 cup) of skim milk. Let stand for 5 to 10 minutes.

1) Mix dry ingredients. Melt margarine and add along with sour milk.

2) Pour mixture into a lightly greased 2.5 L (9x9 inch) square baking dish and bake at 175 C (350 F) for approximately 40 minutes.

Nutrition notes: Bran is high in fiber. Include high fiber and low fat foods in your diet everyday. Healthy eating can help reduce your risk of cancer and other chronic diseases like heart disease and diabetes.



Did You Know... What It Is?

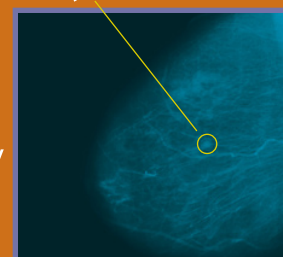
Early detected cancer

Mammogram

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A mammogram is a low dose X-Ray of the breast. The X-Ray can find changes in the breast, even when the changes are too small for you or your doctor to feel or see. For most women, the X-Ray will be normal. Regular breast screening can find cancer when it is small. Finding a cancer when it is small means:

- there is a better chance of treating the cancer successfully
- it is less likely to spread
- there may be more treatment options



Telemammography Program Makes Breast Health Possible

For Aboriginal women living in remote communities in the James Bay area, getting to a hospital for a mammogram was next to impossible. That changed when the Weeneebayko General Hospital and Timmins District Hospital joined together to bring mammography closer to home for women in the region.

In September, 2005 the two hospitals launched the Weeneebayko General Hospital Telemammography Program. The program enables women to have their breast check-up at Weeneebayko General Hospital.

"Before we started the Telemammography program, women living in the James Bay area had to get to the hospital in Timmins for a mammogram," explained Kendra Benham, Clinical Support Services and Diagnostic Imaging Manager at Weeneebayko General Hospital. "For women living in remote areas of the region, it was a difficult and expensive journey."

The program arranges transportation for women to and from the breast exam and women in the same family can make appointments to be screened on the same day. Also, because it is a small clinic, the mammography technologist can take the time to talk to each woman and explain what to expect during a mammogram, making the experience more personal and comfortable.

The Telemammography program uses digital, rather than film mammography. This means that images of the breast are captured on computer and can be sent electronically to Timmins District Hospital. There, the radiologist can look at the images and let the technologist know via telephone if more images are needed, instead of waiting for the film images to arrive by mail. This saves women from having to book a second appointment for imaging.

In the two years since the Telemammography program has been open, 20 cases of breast cancer have been diagnosed. These women were able to be screened for breast cancer much closer to home, decreasing the amount of time they to wait to receive the results of their mammogram.

"These kinds of programs are so important. They save lives and make sure that Aboriginal women living in remote areas have the same access to mammography and standard of care as other women in Ontario," said Ms. Benham. "Some women have indicated that they would not have traveled for an appointment."

To find out more about the Weeneebayko General Hospital Telemammography Program, contact Kendra Benham by phone at 1-705-658-4544 extension 2303, or by email at: Kendra.Benham@wha.on.ca



Correen Nootchta, MRT(R.) Mammography Technologist at Weeneebayko General Hospital demonstrates the machine used for mammograms to an audience of women at the program launch in November, 2007.



Please place community contact information here.

Tell us what you think!

Please give us your feedback on our newsletter. Or drop us a word if you have a personal story to share or topics you'd like to see in future issues.

Lois.white@cancercare.on.ca

For an electronic copy of this and past newsletters, visit:
www.cancercare.on.ca/index_AboriginalCancerStrategy.htm

Resources

Cancer Care Ontario – Ontario Breast Screening Program – information on the program and locations and how to make an appointment, downloadable educational materials and breast cancer facts.
www.cancercare.on.ca/index_breastScreening.htm

Canadian Cancer Society – Choose breast cancer from "Quicklinks." Information on breast cancer risk factors, detection and screening, treatment and a guideline with important questions to ask your healthcare team.
www.cancer.ca

Canadian Breast Cancer Network – Click on "Groups" for Aboriginal site. Includes links to tools and information developed by Aboriginal groups to help those living with cancer in Aboriginal communities. Some resources are available in Inuktitut, Oji-Cree and other Aboriginal languages.
www.cbcn.ca

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (The National Inuit Organization) – Includes a step-by-step guide to doing a self breast examination with easy to follow diagrams.
<http://www.itk.ca/health/cancer-understanding-risks-breastexam.php>

If you are interested in any information or would like to find out more please feel free to contact our office.

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Take a look at our website for up-to-date information.

www.cancercare.on.ca
http://www.cancercare.on.ca/Index_AboriginalCancerStrategy.htm

JOACC PTO membership list

Nishnawbe-Aski Nation
Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians
Union of Ontario Indians – Anishnabek Nation
Grand Council Treaty #3
Independent First Nations
Métis Nation of Ontario
Ontario Native Women's Association
Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres

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Cancer Care Ontario is an umbrella organization that steers and coordinates Ontario's cancer services and prevention efforts so that fewer people get cancer, and patients receive the highest possible quality of care.



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a cancer care ontario program