

IDPH And IEMA Observe National Mammography Day By Reminding Women To Schedule Mammograms

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SPRINGFIELD – National Mammography Day is Oct. 15 and state agencies are using the observance to remind women to schedule their mammograms. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 41,000 women and 450 men in the United States die each year from breast cancer. Early detection can help save lives. Mammography remains the most effective means to detect cancer in its earliest stages.

Except for skin cancers, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer in women. The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) administers the Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program (IBCCP) which offers free mammograms, breast exams, pelvic exams, and Pap tests to eligible women. Even if a woman has already been diagnosed with cancer, she may receive free treatment if she qualifies. Since 1995, IBCCP has provided more than 800,000 mammograms, breast and pelvic exams, Pap tests, or other breast and cervical cancer services to more than 340,000 women in Illinois.

“An estimated 1,840 women in Illinois will die of breast cancer this year,” said IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike. “We can decrease that number by urging women to get routine breast cancer screenings. If detected while still in its earlier stages, breast cancer can be successfully treated. Mammography is still the most effective screening for early detection, which can provide women with better treatment options and results.”

The Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) inspects and certifies nearly 360 mammography machines in Illinois each year to ensure equipment is operating properly and is capable of providing high-quality mammograms to detect breast cancer. The agency also reviews quality assurance records to ensure equipment is operating properly and that patients are receiving accurate scans.

“Early detection of breast cancer is critical for saving lives,” said IEMA Director Alicia Tate-Nadeau. “We conduct thorough annual inspections of mammography equipment and a facility’s operating procedures to ensure it is operating properly to produce the best image possible.”

A mammogram is a special breast x-ray that can detect 90 percent of cancers, even before a lump can be felt. This high detection rate makes it an important tool, along with self-examinations and regular clinical examinations, in the early detection of breast cancer.

Illinois was one of the first states in the nation approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to inspect and certify mammography equipment under the Mammography Quality Standards Act (MQSA) State Certifying Agency Program.

IEMA has six state inspectors who personally inspect every mammography unit in the state each year.

Facilities are required to review clinical images for specific attributes that help ensure mammograms continue to be performed at the highest quality possible. Inspectors review this data annually as part of a facility’s annual inspection.

State law requires mammography facilities to provide patients with information about breast cancer detection and diagnosis. The informational brochure, Breast Cancer, Your Right to Know, is available on IEMA's website (www.iema.illinois.gov) for use by facilities and patients. The brochure is available in both English and Spanish.

To learn more about the IDPH Breast and Cervical Cancer Program, call the Women's Health-Line toll-free at 888-522-1282 (800-547-0466 TTY)