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News You Can Use

Optima Medicare HMO

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October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Breast cancer is one of the most common types of cancer for women in the United States and “pink ribbon” initiatives are common throughout the year. Awareness -- and the importance of mammograms as a screening tool -- is fantastic, but there can be some confusion about when to start screening for breast cancer.

Recently, a reporter conducted “woman on the street” interviews to find out what women in HamptonRoads know about current recommendations for mammograms. Here are some of the answers:

“I heard that you should do it when you turn 40. But then I also heard maybe you could wait until 45?”

“I guess I’ll do it whenever my doctor tells me to.”

“I was afraid because people said it hurt so I waited until next year, and then the year after that.”

“I’m not sure about the statistics of which ethnic groups are at higher risks.”

With the recent change in national recommendations about mammograms from the American Cancer Society and disagreement from other professional groups like the American College of Radiology and the American College of Surgeons, it can be hard to keep things straight. Here’s what local experts from the Sentara Cancer Network want you to keep in mind:

(Read more on page 2)

Important Information for our Readers

News You Can Use examines issues affecting the majority of our Optima Medicare membership. However, it is important to note that there may be occasional differences in health plan designs among the customers we serve.

If you have any questions about the information in this issue, please contact Member Services at the number located on the back of your member ID card.

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All Women Have Some Risk

"At age 40, all women should have the conversation with their doctor about when would be a good age for them to begin screening," said Dr. Kelley Allison, a fellowship-trained radiologist with Sentara Cancer Network on the Peninsula.

Screening mammograms, starting at age 40, are not done just to establish a baseline. These screenings are to look for cancers that could already be present. Women can develop cancer in their 40s. In fact, in a two-year period (2013-2015), there were 577 women aged 40-49 who were diagnosed with breast cancer.

Hearing blanket statements of recommendations by age group shouldn't replace personalized advice from a healthcare professional. There are many factors, including:

- Personal health history
- Current health status
- Family health history
- Age of first menstrual period
- Age of first childbirth
- Breastfeeding history
- Lifestyle habits
- Current health conditions
- Environmental risks

Screenings: Simple and Usually Uneventful

"There are a lot of myths related to breast cancer risks. The best way to know when to screen is to talk to your doctor," said Dr. Terryl Times, a board-certified surgeon in Williamsburg who often performs breast cancer surgery in the Sentara Cancer Network.

It can be hard to convince people without family history or symptoms to be screened, but 75 percent of women diagnosed with breast cancer have no significant family history, which means more than half of people with breast cancer may not be on the lookout for symptoms.

Out of 1,000 women screened, just five will be diagnosed with breast cancer. For 9 out of 10 people, this is just a simple test, and they are relieved that nothing has been found.

Screenings are part of preventive cancer care and effective in alerting people who currently have a small, early-stage cancer in their body. When breast cancer is found through mammography, the cure rate is very high. For people who do have cancer, this can be a life-saving step on the road to treating cancer.

Early Detection, Better Outcomes

Mammograms are easy to schedule and are accessible throughout Hampton Roads. The Affordable Care Act requires health plans, including those sold on the healthcare exchange, to include annual screening mammograms without a copay or deductible for women 40 and older. For women who do not have insurance, there are grant programs to cover costs.

An abnormal mammogram may cause anxiety but most women (61 out of 1,000) have additional imaging and find nothing is wrong.

"If we do see a mammogram and notice an abnormality or something we think we need to clarify, that woman will be called back to do additional testing, which often times means a few additional pictures. This happens about 10 percent of the time, most of which turn out to be normal. Women should not fear having that mammogram," said Dr. Allison. "Most of my job is to reassure women that they are OK."

If something is found, there are a number of treatment options which work best when tumors are caught early. Talk to your doctor about when you should get a mammogram, and how often. There are good reasons to take the time to discuss this, and to engage in preventive care to stay ahead of any potential cancer risks.

Based on article "Confused About Mammograms? We Have Answers." by Sentara.
For more information see www.sentara.com/mammogram

Seasonal Influenza (Flu) Vaccination

Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and can lead to hospitalization and death. Every year in the United States, millions of people are sickened, hundreds of thousands are hospitalized and thousands or tens of thousands of people die from the flu.

Anyone can get the flu (even healthy people) and serious problems related to the flu can happen at any age, but some people are a higher risk of developing serious flu-related complications if they get sick. This includes people 65 years and older, people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions (such as diabetes, asthma, or heart disease), pregnant women, and young children.

The best way and most important step to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year. CDC recommends that everyone 6 months of age and older get a flu vaccine each year. Flu vaccination can reduce flu illnesses, doctors' visits, and missed work and school due to flu, as well as prevent flu-related hospitalizations.

Learn more about the flu and flu vaccine.
www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/flu/public/index

Gym Reimbursement

Choose a fitness program that works for you! We will reimburse you a portion of your fees for membership or exercise classes at any fitness or exercise center. You may refer to your benefit materials for plan details. Please feel free to contact us by calling Member Services at the number on the back of your member ID card if you have any questions!

Fall Prevention

1 in 4 people 65 and older falls each year. Falls can lead to a loss of independence, but they are preventable. Here are four things you can do to prevent falls:

1. Speak up.

Talk openly with your healthcare provider about fall risks and prevention. Ask your doctor or pharmacist to review your medicine.

2. Keep moving.

Begin an exercise program to improve your leg strength and balance.

3. Get an annual eye exam.

Replace eyeglasses as needed.

4. Make your home safer.

Remove clutter and tripping hazards.

For more information visit www.cdc.gov/steady and check with your physician before beginning any exercise program.

Member Rights and Responsibilities

The Optima Medicare Member Bill of Rights and Responsibilities ensures that all members are treated in a manner consistent with the mission, goals, and objectives of Optima Medicare. It also ensures that members are aware of their obligations and responsibilities upon joining Optima Medicare and throughout their membership with the Plan.

New and existing members are notified of their rights and responsibilities in the Evidence of Coverage.

To view this information online:

- visit optimahealth.com/medicare, and
- select [Member Rights and Responsibilities](#) from the Required Information menu at the bottom of the page.

Health and Wellness Information

OptimaHealth 

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Tips for Your Taste Buds: Pumpkin Soup

Ingredients:

- 3 cups water
- 1/4 lb beef round roast, thawed, sliced thinly
- 2 cans (about 30 oz) low-sodium pumpkin
- 2 tbsp maple syrup (or 2 tbsp brown sugar)
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon (if you have it)
- 1/4 cup onions, diced

Directions:

1. In a medium-size pot, bring water to a boil
2. Add beef roast to boiling water. Boil for 5 to 10 minutes.
3. Add pumpkin, maple syrup, and pepper to pot. If using cinnamon, add that too. Mix well.
4. Lower heat and cook for about 10 minutes.
5. Put 2 tsp of onion on top of each bowl. Serve hot.

*The recommended safe minimum internal temperature for beef roast is 145 degrees F.

"Pumpkin Soup." A Harvest of Recipes with USDA Foods <<https://whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/featuredlinks/HarvestofRecipes.pdf>>

Nutritional Information:

6 servings; 1 cup each

Amount per Serving:

Calories 133
Fat 2.2g
Protein 8g
Sodium 18mg