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### **October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month**

CHARLEVOIX – The colors of October include yellow leaves, orange pumpkins, and—perhaps most importantly—pink ribbons. October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and the Health Department of Northwest Michigan reminds all women to schedule their annual exams. Make your appointment today; it could save your life.

According to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, breast cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer deaths for women in the state, and is the most frequently diagnosed cancer. In spite of this, only half of Michigan women ages 40 years and older received timely breast cancer screening. It is currently recommended that women ages 40 years and older have a mammogram and a clinical breast exam annually. Women ages 20-39 years should have a clinical breast exam at least every three years.

Joy Klooster, who coordinates women’s health programs for the Health Department, encourages all women to seek preventive care. “‘Every Woman, Every Year’ is our motto for women aged 40 and older to get screened for breast cancer,” she says. “With regular screening, breast cancer is more likely to be detected at an earlier stage, when it is most treatable.”

If costs associated with screenings or treatments are a cause for concern, Klooster said the Health Department can help. “We want to make sure all women have access to preventive care, like breast exams and screenings,” she explained.

Klooster coordinates the Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Navigation Program (BCCCNP) at the Health Department. BCCCNP provides free annual breast and cervical cancer screening and diagnostic services to qualifying women ages 40-64 who have no insurance, or who have high deductibles. Navigation services are available for eligible women with insurance who may have a barrier to getting screened. Women younger than 40 years of age can also benefit if they’ve been previously diagnosed with abnormalities. If screening results require follow-up, the treatment may be covered by the Medicaid Treatment Act.

To learn more about BCCCNP, visit [www.nwhealth.org](http://www.nwhealth.org). Call **(800) 432-4121** for more information or to schedule an appointment. The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego Counties.

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