

Madison and Dane County Public Health: Wisconsin Well Woman Program offers free breast cancer screenings

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Breast cancer is the second most common cancer in women. One in eight women in the United States will develop breast cancer at some point in their lives. Breast cancer rates for white women have generally stabilized in the past few years, but incidence rates among black women continue to rise.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and the Wisconsin Well Woman Program (WWWP) provides free breast cancer screenings for women with limited income and little or no insurance. The Well Woman Program offers free breast exams, mammograms, and other diagnostic tests for eligible women ages 45-65, and women ages 35-44 who have breast symptoms or concerns.

“Enrollment in the program is quick and easy and can be completed over the phone in 10 minutes by calling 608-242-6392,” says Kari Sievert, WWWP Coordinator for Rock and Dane Counties. “Once enrolled, exams are available at more than 35 clinics in Dane and Rock Counties.”

Breast cancer screening is important because when breast cancer is found early, there are more treatment options and many women, once treated, remain cancer free.

“It is important to know when to have your first mammogram and how often to be screened,” said Sievert. “Being able to talk with a doctor about your personal circumstances, risk factors, and screening options can be life changing.”

It is particularly important for women of color to be screened regularly. Despite having similar incidence rates to white women, African American women are 42 percent more likely to die from breast cancer and are more likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer at a later stage of the disease.

The WWWP in collaboration with the Komen Treatment Access Fund (KTAF), sponsored by Susan G. Komen- Wisconsin has been providing free breast cancer screenings for eligible women in Dane and Rock Counties since 1994. The WWWP & KTAF Programs, administered through Public Health Madison and Dane County, serve more than 600 eligible women each year.