

## **Importance of Breast Cancer Prevention**

By: Kyle Swift, CEO, Woodland Heights Medical Center

Across our community and the entire country this month, we will celebrate the brave women who have done battle with breast cancer. It's a time of reflection and celebration for many women, as they bond together to celebrate a precious victory and to support causes designed to eradicate the disease. But October can also be a difficult time for some, as we are encouraged to remember friends or loved ones who lost their battle with breast cancer – some of them at a very young age.

But perhaps most importantly, October traditionally provides opportunities to educate millions of women on the importance of screening and prevention. Between 1990 and 2013, the death rate from breast cancer decreased by 37 percent, or nearly a quarter of a million lives. The decrease is certainly due in large part to women declining hormone therapies during and after menopause, but also to aggressive campaigns encouraging women over 40 to be vigilant about mammograms. Today, 67% of women over age 40 report having had a mammogram in the past two years, totaling nearly 39 million mammograms per year. While mammograms aren't perfect, the digital diagnostic tools of today can detect changes in the breast years before a tumor develops. And statistics tell us that the five-year survival rate is nearly 99% when breast cancer is detected in the early stages.

While recommendations have changed through the years regarding who should get screened and when, the general standards for women at average risk remain the same:

- Starting at age 40, all women can choose whether to start annual screening with mammograms.
- Women age 45-54 should have a mammogram every year
- Women age 55 and older should switch to mammograms every 2 years, but can choose to continue annual screenings
- Screening should continue as long as a woman is in good general health, and is expected to live 10 more years or longer

Some women are at higher risk of developing breast cancer based on family history, genetic mutations and some prior health conditions and therapies. If you fall into this category, it's important to talk with your doctor about more aggressive detection measures and whether they're right for you. Today, our hospital offers technologies like digital mammography, breast MRI and breast biopsy, giving those who are most vulnerable to this disease the best chance to detect it early and survive.

Of course, it's vitally important to remember that – like any cancer or other disease – prevention is absolutely the best medicine. One in eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer during their lifetime. Minimize your risk by following these general rules to supercharge your immune system:

- Keep a healthy weight, with a BMI at or below 24
- Engage in physical exercise at least four hours each week
- Get eight hours of sleep most days – preferably during nighttime hours
- Limit alcohol consumption to no more than one drink per day
- Avoid exposure to chemicals that can cause cancer – you can find a detailed list of known carcinogens at the [www.Cancer.org](http://www.Cancer.org) website

- Limit exposure to radiation, using X-rays, CT scans and PET scans only when medically necessary
- Before taking any type of hormone replacement or birth control therapy, ask your doctor to ensure you are balancing the risks and benefits

As always, Woodland Heights Medical Center is honored to be your partner in healthcare.

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### **About Woodland Heights Medical Center**

Established in 1918, Woodland Heights Medical Center was Lufkin's first hospital. Now, more than nine decades later, Woodland Heights is recognized throughout Deep East Texas as the leading provider of high quality, innovative health care services. Accommodating a wide range of clinical specialties, Woodland Heights has achieved excellence in key medical and surgical areas including cardiology, pulmonology, neurology, orthopedic surgery, physical medicine/rehabilitation, vascular surgery and obstetrics and gynecology. Woodland Heights also offers a full range of outpatient diagnostic services including advanced imaging, laboratory, outpatient surgery and emergency services. Through its Rehabilitation Center, Woodland Heights offers cardiac rehabilitation, stroke recovery and physical and occupational rehabilitation. The facility also houses the only Level 2 Neonatal Intensive Care Unit in the deep East Texas area. Woodland Heights is directly or indirectly owned by a partnership that proudly includes physician owners, including certain members of the hospital's medical staff. Combining modern facilities, leading technology, an exceptional staff and a commitment to the communities it serves, Woodland Heights Medical Center remains at the forefront of quality health care in Deep East Texas.