

News Release

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For Immediate Release

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Cancer Prevention Screenings

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) encourages residents to get recommended cancer screenings to save lives. Cancer is the second most common cause of death in southwest Nebraska and in the US, exceeded only by heart disease. It is estimated that there will be a little over 2 million new diagnosed cancer cases in the US in 2024. Excluding non-melanoma skin cancer, at least 42% of those cases are potentially avoidable. That is a substantial portion of cancers that could be prevented by making healthy choices like eating right, staying active, and not smoking. It is also important to follow recommended screening guidelines, which can help detect certain cancers early.

Below is a list of the different types of cancer screenings available and the recommended age for each one. These cancer screening guidelines are for people with an average risk for certain cancers. It is a good idea to talk to your doctor about which tests you might need and when you will need them.

Cervical Cancer Screening: The goal of this screening is to find precancerous cervical cell changes when treatment can prevent cervical cancer from developing. It is done through either an HPV test or a pap test. The HPV test checks cells for an HPV infection, while a pap test collects cervical cells for testing. It is recommended that cervical screenings begin at age 21.

Breast Cancer Screening: These screenings are done to check the breast for cancer before there are signs or symptoms. There are several types of breast screenings beginning with breast self-exams. Being familiar with the look and feel of your own breasts can help you notice any lumps, pain, or change in size that may be of concern. Mammograms are a type of x-ray of the breast and are usually the best way to find breast cancer early. Breast MRIs are used along with mammograms to screen women who are at high risk. It is recommended that women who are 50-74 yrs old and at average risk, get a mammogram every two years. Women in their 40's should talk to their doctor about when and how often to get screened.

Colorectal Cancer Screening: Anyone at average risk for colon cancer should begin colorectal screening at age 45 and follow regular interval screening through the age of 74. There are many different types of colorectal screenings. The two most common are colonoscopies and stool tests. A colonoscopy is a medical procedure that allows your doctor to view your entire colon and rectum for any precancerous polyps. The stool test is done at home by collecting a small sample of stool and sending it in to a lab to look for small amounts of blood and/or DNA markers associated with colorectal cancer.

Prostate Cancer Screening: There are two tests that are commonly used to screen for prostate cancer. The first is a blood test called prostate specific antigen (PSA) that measures the level of PSA in the blood. The other is a digital rectal examination (DRE). This is used to check for any abnormalities on the prostate. Men who are 55 to 69 years old, and at average risk, should talk to their doctor about if and when to get prostate cancer screening done.

Lung Cancer Screening: The only recommended screening for lung cancer is a low-dose computed tomography (LDCT) scan. It is a pain free, relatively short CT scan of your lungs. Anyone ages 50-80 years old that has a 20-year or more smoking history and smoke now or have quit within the past 15 years should have a lung cancer screening done yearly.

“Screening tests are used to find cancer before a person has any symptoms, so it is important to get regular screenings even if you feel fine,” states Lori Rowley, RN “Cancer screenings, along with healthy lifestyle changes, go a long way in preventing cancer.”

For more information on cancer screenings, talk to the public health nurses at 308-345-4223. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. The website swhealth.ne.gov contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health. You can also follow SWNPHD on Facebook, TikTok, You Tube and Instagram.

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