What You Should Know About Breast Cancer?

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Everyone should be aware of their own health risks. No matter your age or gender, it is important to see a primary care provider (PCP) at least once a year to maintain good overall health and wellness.

Breast cancer is the second most common cancer among American women in the United States, only second to skin cancer. Most breast cancer is found in women who are 50 years or older, but it can also affect women 45 years and younger. Black and white women get breast cancer at about the same rate, but black women die from breast cancer at a higher rate than white women (CDC, 2020). Another interesting fact is that men can get breast cancer too!

Monitoring changes in your own breasts through conducting monthly self-breast exams and early detection are two important strategies that we can all take to maintain overall health and wellness.

What is Breast Cancer?
Breast cancer is a disease in which cells in the breast grow out of control. When cancer starts in the breast, it is called breast cancer. There are different kinds of breast cancer. The kind of breast cancer that occurs depends on which cells in the breast turn into cancer. Breast cancer can be found in different parts of the breast.

What can I do to reduce my risk breast cancer in the future?
Many factors over the course of a lifetime can influence your breast cancer risk. You can’t change some factors, such as getting older or your family history, but you can help lower your risk of breast cancer by taking care of your health in the following ways:
- Keep a healthy weight. Eat a well-balanced diet.
- Exercise regularly (150-300 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes per week of vigorous aerobic activity, or a combination of both, preferably spread throughout the week; American Heart Association, 2020).
- Avoid alcohol, or limit alcoholic drinks to no more than once a day.

Those who are at highest risk are those who have a strong family history of breast cancer, ovarian cancer, or those who have inherited genetic abnormalities (especially those who have a close relative diagnosed with breast cancer at 45 years of age or younger). If you have a family history of breast cancer, talk to your PCP about other ways to lower your risks.