

Women can walk in to get screened at Mammothon

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Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women — affecting approximately one in nine — yet only 61 per cent of eligible women in the province are being screened, according to Cancer Care Ontario.

Experts agree that if caught early, there's a higher rate of successful treatment.

Just in time for an early Mothers' Day gift, the central regional cancer screening program is partnering with all three hospitals in York Region to make it easier for women 50 to 74 to get screened for breast cancer by hosting a Mammothon, a one-day mammogram marathon.

The event is being held at six participating Ontario Breast Screening Program sites in York Region, North York and South Simcoe — including Richmond Hill's Mackenzie Health, Markham Stouffville Hospital and Southlake Regional Health Centre.

Eligible women are invited to put their hesitations aside by walking in for a screening mammogram — a specialized x-ray that

makes it possible to detect tumours that cannot be felt by a self-breast exam — directly through the program at the hospital.

Lori Allen, event organizer and team leader of mammography and the screening program at Southlake, knows how important it is to be proactive and to overcome barriers to screening.

"Research tells us that most cancers are treatable if caught early, but women are avoiding breast cancer screening because they're afraid of the results and they don't have the time," Ms Allen said. "But we know from experience that there are serious and sometimes life-threatening risks associated with procrastinating."

Those attending Southlake are asked to pre-book at 905-895-4521 ext 6228.

At Mackenzie Health and Markham Stouffville hospitals, women can walk in with no appointment necessary.

Myrna Titleman of Thornhill is among the many women who never believed breast cancer would happen to her. She had no family history and was receiving annual mammograms. Then, late last year cancer was diag-

nosed and a lumpectomy was performed in December. She highly recommends all women get screened and follow-up if they find something themselves.

"The worst part was not knowing what exactly I was facing," said Ms Titleman. "I knew it was a tumour, but once cancer was confirmed I couldn't have asked for a better experience. Everyone was very caring and professional and I received treatment very quickly."

At Mackenzie Health, all women need to bring is a valid Ontario Health card. Registration takes place in Patient Registration-POD C, on the main floor of the hospital's

C-Wing.

To participate in the Mammothon, women must:

- be between the ages of 50 and 74;
- have never had a mammogram or have not been screened in more than two years;
- not be experiencing acute breast symptoms;
- have no personal history of breast cancer; and
- not have breast implants.

For questions about breast screening, call the OBSP Ontario Breast Screening Program toll-free at 1-800-668-9304.

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