



MEDIA RELEASE

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**More women getting breast screenings in Niagara,
but thousands could benefit but aren't**

The good news: the number of women getting breast screenings continues to rise each year in Niagara.

The challenge: there are more than 13,000 women in the region who should be getting screened, but aren't.

"Breast cancer is the most common cancer in Canadian women. One in nine women will be diagnosed in their lifetime," says Dr. Janice Giesbrecht, Medical Director of Niagara Health System's Oncology Program. "Regular breast screening saves lives and we want more women in Niagara to take advantage of this service. Routine mammograms are key to women between the ages of 50 and 74 detecting breast cancer early and increasing the number of treatment options and improving the chance of survival."

In partnership with Cancer Care Ontario, NHS works aggressively to reach women in the target age group and encourage them to take advantage of the services offered by the Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP). The NHS provides breast screening services at five of its sites.

Since 2011, the number of patients in the target age group receiving breast screenings in Niagara has risen by about 15 per cent. A total of 22,039 patients were screened in Niagara over the last fiscal year (2013-14). That compares to 20,307 in 2012-13 and 19,293 (2011-12).

However, about 13,600 women in Niagara who are in the target age group are not getting regular mammograms through OBSP. Some of the factors in women not getting screened include cultural, language and socio-economic barriers, says Dr. Giesbrecht.

"While we're pleased more patients are getting screened, there is still a lot of work to do to make sure even more women undergo regular screening," says Dr. Giesbrecht, who played a key role in launching Niagara's first breast cancer screening clinic in 1992. "The message is not just to the women in the target age group, but to all the women around them, especially those with barriers to access to screening."

Women aged 50 to 74 can make an appointment at an OBSP site without a doctor's referral. For more information on NHS breast screen programming, please call 905-378-4647 or visit our website at www.niagarahealth.on.ca/en/breast-screening. Additional resources are available at Cancer Care Ontario's website, <https://www.cancercare.on.ca/pcs/screening/breastscreening/>

Breast cancer facts from Cancer Care Ontario:

- In 2014, it is estimated that 9,500 Ontario women will be diagnosed with breast cancer and that 1,950 will die from this disease.
- Breast cancer survival rates are among the highest for all cancers in Ontario.
- Breast cancer occurs primarily in women 50 to 74 years of age (57 percent of cases).
- Most women diagnosed with breast cancer have no family history of the disease
- Women aged 30 to 69 who have been confirmed to be at high risk for breast cancer should be screened annually with mammography and breast MRI
- Women aged 50-74 are encouraged to be screened for breast cancer every two years with mammography.

NHS Breast Screening Program

The NHS has three full-service Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) Centres and Assessment Clinics in Niagara Falls, St. Catharines and Welland Sites. Port Colborne and Fort Erie Sites offer an OBSP Satellite Clinic, where appointments for screening mammograms are offered.

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