

Caledon residents age 40 and above can now book referral-free breast cancer screening

October is breast cancer awareness month

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Eligible residents of Caledon and Dufferin can now book referral-free breast cancer screening.

On October 8, the Hills of Headwaters Collaborative Ontario Health Team (HOHC OHT) and Headwaters Health Care Centre announced that women, Two-Spirit, trans and non-binary people in Ontario aged 40 to 49 can now be screened for breast cancer without a referral. Prior to October 8, referral-free screening was only available for people aged 50 to 74.

The change comes as an expansion to the Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP).

“The expansion will provide greater access and allow more people to take action for their breast health,” reads an HOHC OHT news release.

According to 2023 Canadian Cancer Statistics, breast cancer cases in the 40 to 49 age bracket represent 13 per cent of all projected breast cancer cases in Canada.

The Headwaters Health Care Centre, one of three OBSP locations in Dufferin and Caledon, is offering more screening mammograms in October for breast cancer awareness month. A mammogram is a highly-effective screening test for breast cancer, notes the HOHC OHT news release.

Dr. Grace Wang, Chief of Staff, and a general surgeon at Headwaters Health Care Centre, said getting a mammogram is one of the best ways to detect abnormalities in the breast.

“Mammograms can see even the smallest lesions that need treatment, which can lower the risk of dying from breast cancer thanks to early diagnosis. Mammograms are safe and they save lives,” said Wang. “In addition to being a certified centre for the Ontario Breast Screening Program, Headwaters Health Care Centre runs a Breast Diagnostic Assessment Program which helps expedite diagnosis and referral to a breast surgeon.”

For Canadian women, breast cancer is the most common cancer. It's estimated that one in eight women will develop breast cancer in their lifetime. The disease is treatable and curable, and the earlier one is diagnosed, the better one's chances for survival.

Dave Pearson, Executive Director of the HOHC OHT, said early detection helps to save lives.

“According to 2023 data, only 62 per cent of eligible individuals in our community are up to date with mammogram screenings. In collaboration with community partners and physicians, our goal is to increase that number and decrease the risk of breast cancer in Dufferin and Caledon,” said Pearson. “The OBSP expansion will allow more people in our community to self-refer for a mammogram earlier in their life, increasing access to care for those who may not have otherwise been able to receive a referral.”

On October 10, the Headwaters Health Care Foundation held its first-ever Hike2Fight to raise funds for cancer prevention and treatment equipment at the Headwaters Health Care Centre.

The OBSP recommends getting screened for breast cancer every two years. Those looking to learn more about where to get screened

and what to expect can visit the following website: preventingcancer.ca.

To book a mammogram breast screening appointment, eligible individuals can call the Headwaters Health Care Centre at 519-941-2410 extension 2842 Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The Dufferin/Caledon Community Help Line, 1-844-806-3093, can also be called. An operator on the line will help navigate callers to the nearest OBSP site.