

Healthy

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MUSIC LEGEND

Melissa Etheridge

IS TAKING CHARGE
OF HER LIFE

THIS ISSUE: FOCUS
ON WOMEN'S
HEALTH



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A Change FOR THE Better

When Melissa Etheridge was diagnosed with breast cancer, she decided to take charge of her life.



MELISSA ETHERIDGE is more than one of rock music's greatest female icons. Sure, she's a two-time Grammy Award winner who has sold more than 25 million records worldwide, with five platinum albums, but the Kansas-born singer-songwriter has also won an Oscar (for Best Original Song in 2007) and starred in a Broadway musical. Still, even with all that success, one of the defining moments of Melissa's life came when she was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 43. *Healthy Community* recently talked to Melissa to learn more about her struggle with this all-too-common disease and the healing path she took to health and wholeness.



When did you first think you might have breast cancer?

It was October 2004. I was on tour in Ontario, Canada, taking a shower, when I felt a lump in my breast. It was large, too. I kept telling myself that it was just a cyst. But the thought of cancer also entered my mind. My father, aunt and grandmother had died of cancer, and several other family members, including my mother, had the disease. So I decided to have a biopsy performed.

What was the diagnosis?

Stage 3 breast cancer — later diagnosed as Stage 2.

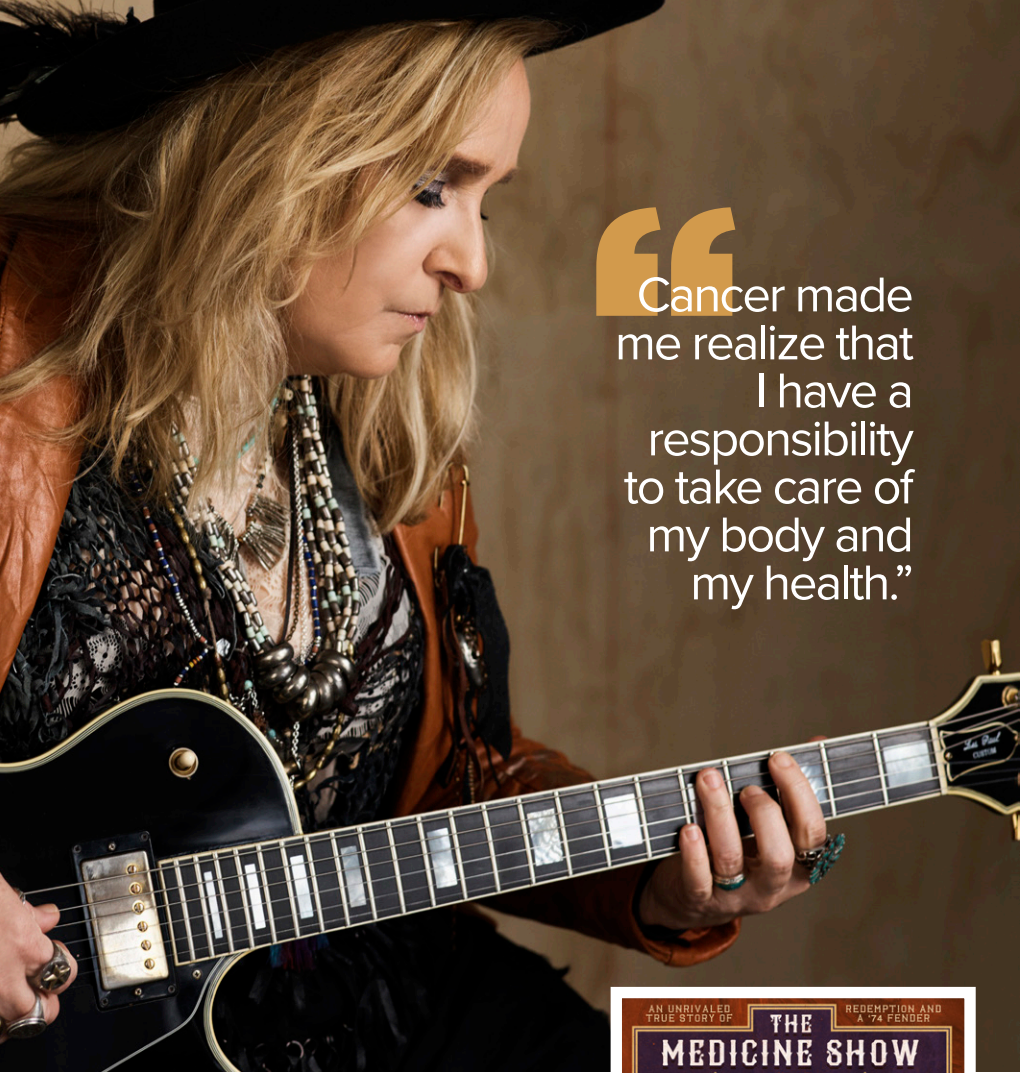
What was your reaction to the news?

I just stood still. My life passed over me like a big wave. The woman radiologist who shared the diagnosis was so reassuring. She told not to be afraid, that I was not going to die. Then she

showed me where she had had a double mastectomy after her breast cancer. That was so helpful, to see my diagnosis not as a death sentence, but as the start of a journey. In the end, the diagnosis turned out to be a good thing. It woke me up. After going through a lumpectomy, chemotherapy and 30 days of radiation therapy, I got a new perspective and decided to change my life.

How so?

Before the cancer, like most people in their 30s and early 40s, I thought I was invincible. Because I didn't take care of myself, I started having horrible stomach issues caused by all the sugar and other bad stuff I was eating as well as the stress I was experiencing. During my cancer treatment, I decided to take responsibility for my health. I started eating more fruits and vegetables. I avoid acidic foods, processed foods and sugar, which are all horrible for you. And I drink water — lots of water all day long. It's also



“Cancer made me realize that I have a responsibility to take care of my body and my health.”

Spotlight on Screening

AT THE WOMEN'S Diagnostic Centers of Community Healthcare System, we know waiting for results can be stressful. That is why we offer same day mammography results for the majority of appointment times at all of our accredited testing centers. Each center is supported by the expertise of a dedicated breast radiologist.

Our centers offer advanced diagnostic technology including 3D mammography, breast ultrasound, nonsurgical breast biopsy technology, breast MRI and more.

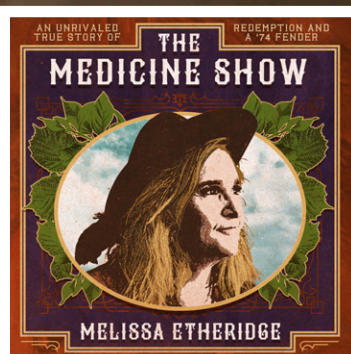
If results are abnormal, a specially trained navigator will coordinate follow-up and any additional testing required. Patients who undergo a biopsy will receive their results by the next day, including Saturdays, for peace of mind.

Women ages 30 and older receive a complimentary breast cancer risk assessment with their mammogram. If an increased risk is discovered, personalized plans of care are available through the High Risk Breast Clinics.

important to watch what we're putting in our minds as well as our bodies. Today I'm much more equipped to deal with the stress and worry that can cause such great harm to the body.

Right after your cancer treatment, you performed at the 2005 Grammy Awards. How did that come about?

I got a call from the Grammys asking if I'd be part of a tribute to Janis Joplin and sing *Piece of My Heart* with Joss Stone. I didn't know what to do at first, but I finally said "Yes." I decided I didn't want to wear a wig because I thought it might fly off my head. So I asked Steven Spielberg, a friend of mine, if I should wear a scarf and he said, "No. You walk out there proud. You're beautiful." At that point in my recovery, I was in bed most of the day. But I had two weeks to prepare, and two days before the Grammys, I started feeling stronger. I remember thinking that I just didn't want anyone to make fun of me.



What was the performance like?

People tell me that it was one of my best. Even today, 15 years later, a week doesn't go by when someone doesn't ask me about that performance, but during the performance, I was so exhausted. I stood in one place rather than moving around, which I usually do. Looking back, I'm proud of what I did. I think it really changed the way people think about breast cancer.

Any final thoughts?

Cancer made me realize that I have a responsibility to take care of my body and my health. It also gave me a new appreciation and gratitude for life. And for that, I'm very thankful. ■

Schedule a Mammogram



Community Healthcare System's Women's Diagnostic Centers are located in Crown Point, East Chicago, Hobart, Munster, St. John and Valparaiso. To make an appointment for your mammogram, call 219-703-2032. For more information, visit COMHS.org.

Breast Cancer: Are you at *Risk?*



A yearly mammogram is your best defense against breast cancer.

WITH THE EXCEPTION OF skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among American women. Some of the most common risk factors for breast cancer include:

- **Getting Older:** Most breast cancers are found in women age 55 and older.
- **Family History:** Having a first-degree relative (mother, sister, daughter) with breast cancer almost doubles a woman's risk. Having two first-degree relative increases the risk about three-fold.
- **Dense Breast Tissue:** This increases the risk of breast cancer by 1 ½ to 2 times compared to a woman with average breast density.
- **Other risk factors** include being overweight, drinking alcohol, lack of physical exercise and having postmenopausal hormone therapy.

A yearly mammogram is your best defense against breast cancer. Yet all too often, women find excuses not to have one. Women have the choice to have a mammogram between the ages 40 to 44 and should have a screening every year starting at age 45 until at least age 54, when screening every two years can begin.

A breast self-exam is another way to check for cancer. A lump in the breast is a common warning sign, as was the case with Melissa Etheridge, but it isn't the only one and may not be the first to develop. Other common signs of possible breast cancer include:

- Lumps in the underarm area
- Changes in breast size and shape
- Pain in a specific area that does not go away
- Prominent veins on the surface of the breast
- Nipple discharge that starts suddenly
- A sore or rash on the nipple
- Swelling, redness or darkening of the breast
- Dimpling of the skin on the breast
- Inversion of the nipple or other parts of the breast

High Risk Breast Clinics



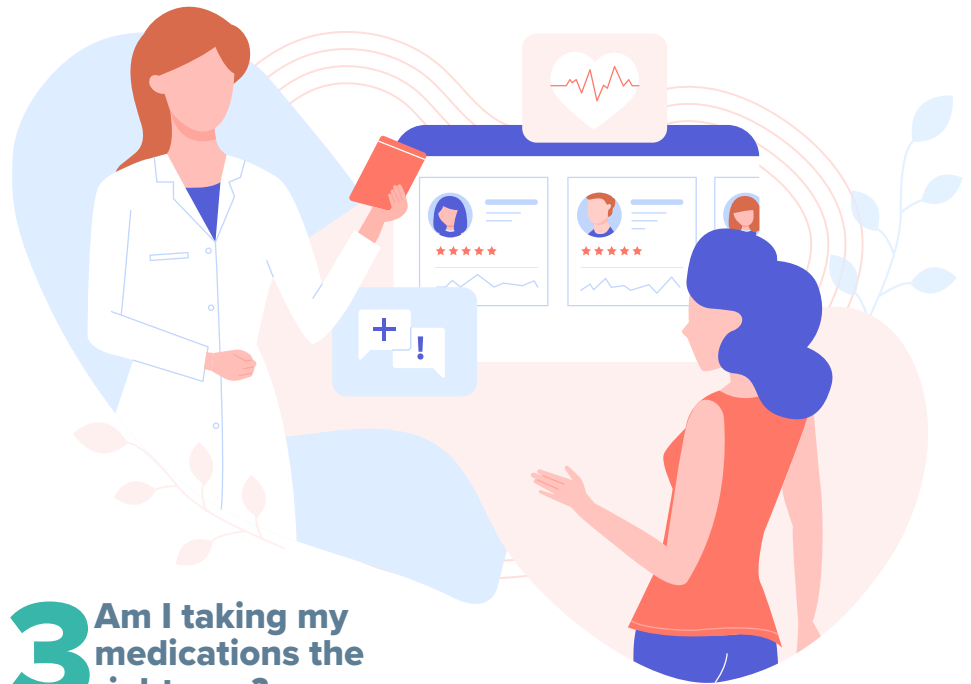
Community Healthcare System's High Risk Breast Clinics are helping women understand and manage their risk for developing breast cancer. The clinics provide education, surveillance options and prevention strategies as well as peace of mind. To learn more, visit COMHS.org.

Sources: cancercenter.com, American Cancer Society

5 Questions Women Should Ask Their Provider



An annual well woman exam, separate from any other visit for sickness or injury, is an important way to stay informed and promote a pattern of preventive care and long term health. These visits may include immunizations, important diagnostic and health screenings, and education and counseling to make informed health decisions. Talk openly with your provider, give honest answers, and be prepared to ask questions that are important to you. And listen carefully. Above all, be your own advocate! Here are five suggestions to help make the most of your next visit with your primary care provider.



1 Is my weight healthy?

Maintaining a normal weight is important for overall health. So ask your provider about your Body Mass Index (BMI), a measure of the relation between your height and your weight. A healthy BMI is between 18.5 and 24.9.

2 How can I improve my health?

Asking a broad question like this gives your provider the opportunity to make recommendations that address your personal health needs, whether it's more exercise, a healthier diet or how to stop smoking.

3 Am I taking my medications the right way?

One study has found that 50 percent of patients don't take their medications correctly, reducing their effectiveness. Be sure you ask your provider or your pharmacist the right way to take your prescriptions.

4 Should I get tested for osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a condition in which bones become brittle because of loss of tissue. Women are four times more likely to develop the disease than men. Initial screening usually starts at age 65. However, if you have certain risk factors, such as a family history of the disease, you may want to be tested as early as age 50.

5 Could you write that down?

A lot of what a provider says in the exam room is forgotten by patients. It's understandable. Providers are sometimes guilty of using too much medical jargon that can be hard to understand, and a visit to the provider is often a stressful time for patients. So don't be bashful. Ask your provider to repeat or rephrase anything you don't understand. Take notes, or encourage your provider to provide a print out that contains the essential information you need to remember.

Sources: National Osteoporosis Foundation, oprah.com, purewow.com

At Community Healthcare System Our Comprehensive Health Services Provide a Lifetime of Care for Women

WOMEN TAKE CARE of many people during their lifetimes: parents, spouses, sons, daughters, grandchildren and others. But all too often, because women are so busy caring for others, they often neglect to take care of themselves. Community Healthcare System encourages every woman to take advantage of the comprehensive range of medical services we provide for every season of a woman's life.

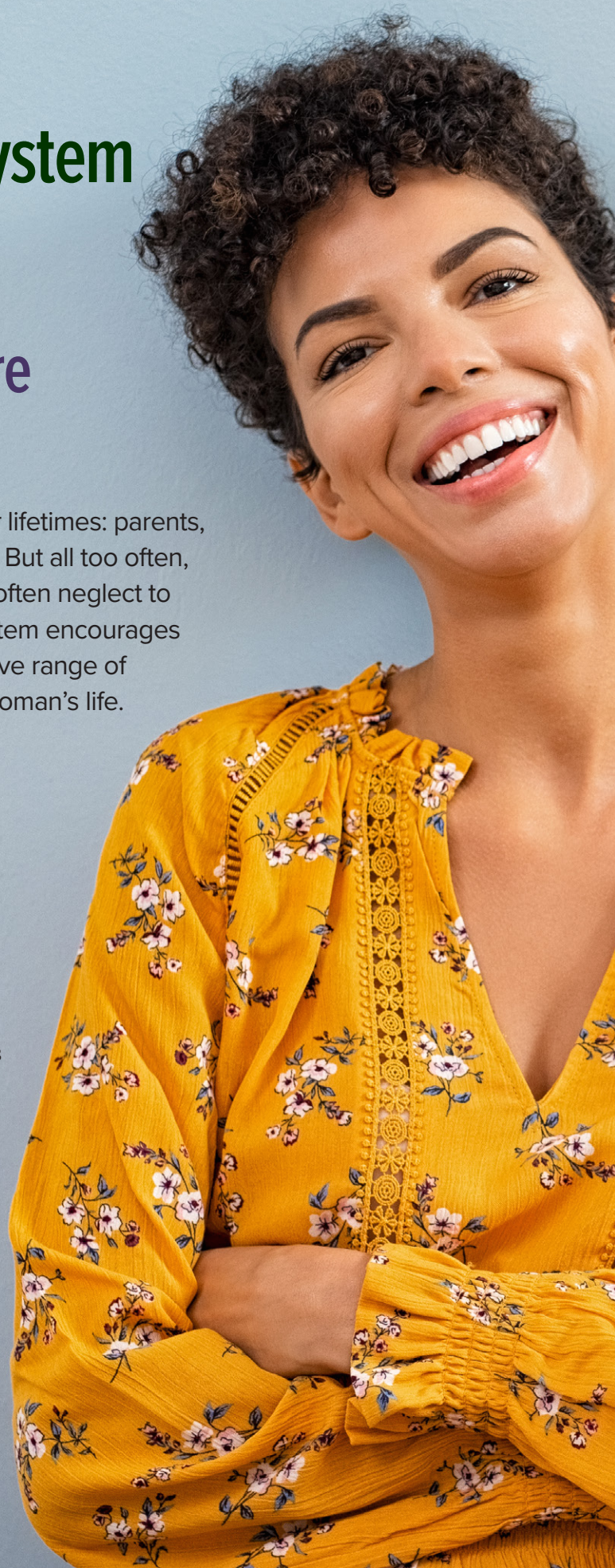
Adolescence (Teens)

ADOLESCENCE IS A TIME of great transformation for a young woman, both physically and emotionally. Because of these changes, it's recommended that teenage girls make their first visit to a gynecologist between the ages of 13 and 15. During this first visit, your provider will take your medical history, check on your immunizations and vaccinations and talk to you about what to expect during future visits. A general physical exam and an external genital exam may also be part of this initial visit. A pelvic exam is usually not performed during the first visit unless you are experiencing abnormal bleeding or pain.

Adolescence is also the right time to develop healthy habits that can last a lifetime. For example, getting plenty of calcium (at least 1,300 milligrams a day) and Vitamin D will help build stronger bones and prevent osteoporosis in later years. Using sunscreen can help prevent the risk of skin cancer, which increases significantly with just one sunburn.

Young Women (20s and 30s)

BECAUSE MANY WOMEN in their 20s and 30s experience few medical problems, they often neglect regular visits to their provider. That's a mistake. Now is the time to form a relationship with a primary care provider that you feel comfortable with.





Starting at age 21, you should have a Pap test every three years to check for abnormal changes that could lead to cervical cancer. When you turn 30, you can keep getting the Pap test until age 65 or you can choose to get an HPV test every five years. That test is useful because most cervical cancers are caused by an infection with HPV (human papillomavirus). If you're ready to start a family, you should schedule a wellness visit with your OBGYN. Breast self-exams should start now, with a clinical breast exam at least every three years. Bone loss can begin

in your 30s, so continue to get plenty of calcium and Vitamin D. At age 35, you should also have your thyroid checked.

Midlife Women (40s and 50s)

NEW HEALTH ISSUES begin to arise for women during this time of life. For some women, the transition to menopause, known as perimenopause, can begin during their early 40s. Most women go through menopause between the ages of 45 and 55, with the average age being 51. Menopause is a normal and natural change that marks the end of a woman's menstrual cycles. During menopause, the body produces smaller amounts of the hormones estrogen and progesterone. Symptoms include hot flashes, vaginal dryness, lack of energy, insomnia, mood changes, even depression.

Decreasing levels of estrogen can also lead to long-term health issues such as osteoporosis. Talk to your provider about improving the strength of your bones and whether you need a bone density exam.

Breast cancer is now a concern. Starting at age 45, schedule an annual mammogram and have your provider perform a clinical breast exam each year. Thyroid disease becomes more common for women at this age, so ask whether you should consider a screening test.

Make sure you get a flu vaccine every year. If you smoke, have diabetes or have long-term heart, lung or liver disease, it's recommended that you also get a pneumonia vaccine. At age 50, ask your provider about scheduling a colonoscopy, a procedure that can find small growths called polyps that can turn into colon cancer. Age 50 is also the time to ask your provider about the vaccine to prevent shingles.

The Mature Years (Over 60)

DURING THESE YEARS, there's a new focus on heart health. Heart disease kills more women than all types of cancer combined. To stay heart healthy, you need to know and manage your total cholesterol, blood pressure, blood sugar level and triglycerides. Talk to your provider about how to stay heart healthy. Learn the symptoms of a heart attack and stroke.

This is the time of life when you need to keep your thinking ability in good shape. So make sure your brain stays busy. Read. Work on crossword puzzles. Take up a new hobby or learn a new language—any kind of mental activity is good for your brain.

It may be time for another colonoscopy. Have the test every 10 years or more frequently if polyps are found.

Like millions of other women, urinary incontinence may become an issue at this time in life. Don't let embarrassment stop you from seeking help. Lifestyle changes, medical devices or a simple outpatient procedure are very effective in treating this condition.

Memory loss is another new concern. A little memory loss is normal as you grow older. But if your memory issues become troubling, be sure to tell your provider. Early diagnosis and treatment can be effective in slowing the progress of memory loss.

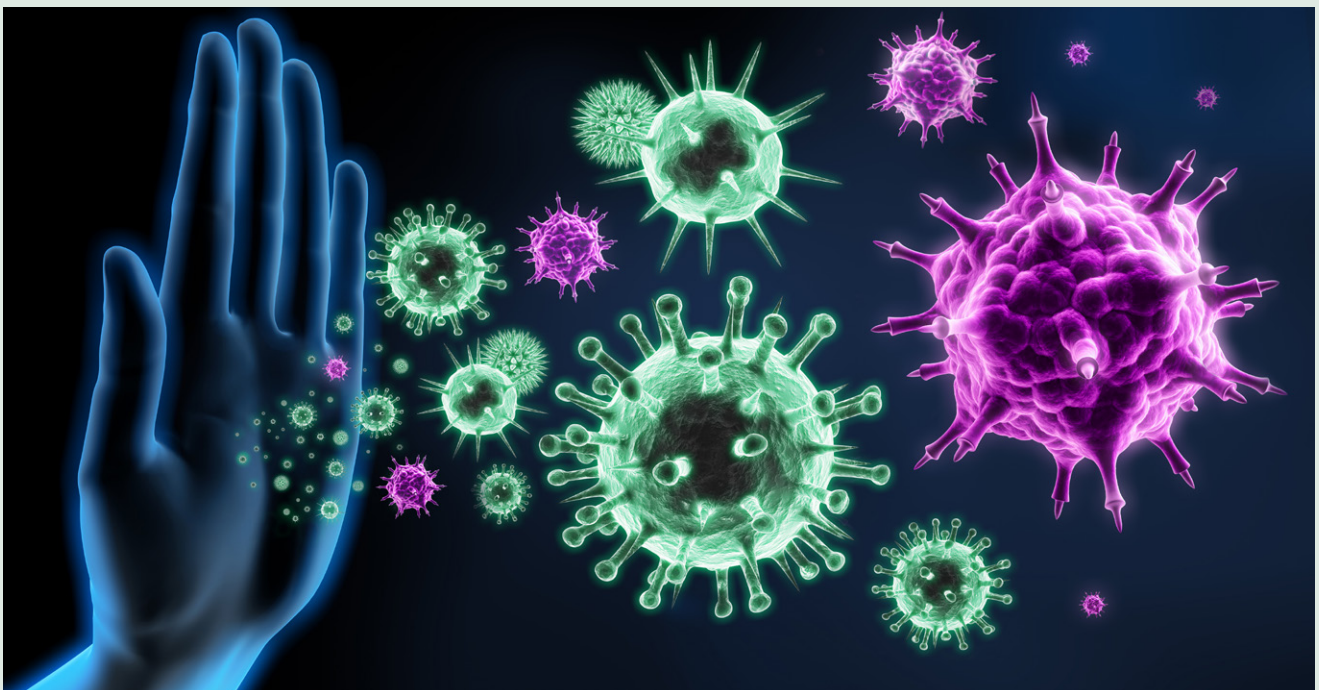
Specialized Women's Care



From pregnancy through menopause, gynecologic and breast health, Community Healthcare System offers compassionate, expert care for the full spectrum of women's health needs. Visit COMHS.org or call 219-703-2032 to learn more.

Sources: webMD, Medical College of Georgia, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

Our Body's **Frontline:** the Immune System



by Karin Woodside

THERE IS AN invisible war going on all around us: a fight against a vast array of viruses and bacteria, threatening our health and well-being. When these microbes invade the body, they can cause infection, sometimes serious enough to lead to a chronic illness.

Fortunately, our bodies have a built-in first line of defense against these invaders: our immune system.

“The immune system is built of a network of different types of cells and organs that all interact to provide many forms of protection,” says Thomas Wilkins, DO, family medicine physician with Community Healthcare System’s Community Care Network of providers. “Some cells engulf and consume infectious germs while others make antibodies that bind to germs so they cannot attach to our healthy cells. The immune

system can also locate cells of the body that are infected and clear them away to prevent spread to noninfected cells. In addition, the immune system creates a ‘memory’ of past infections, which can help fight off illness faster if that germ infects again.”

Infectious agents gain access to the body through a variety of methods.

“Microorganisms can enter the body through the mouth, eyes, nose, urogenital openings or wounds and bites that break the skin barrier,” says Dylan Slotar, MD, infectious disease physician on staff at the hospitals of Community Healthcare System. “Some are spread through direct contact with infected skin, mucous membranes or bodily fluids. Infectious organisms can also spread via indirect contact, when an infected person touches a surface, leaving behind microbes that are transferred to another person who touches the surface and then their eye, mouth or nose.”

Another way infection can enter the body is through food or water that is contaminated with bacteria or from animals and insects, according to Slotar.

“Creatures such as fleas, mites, ticks, rats and dogs can transmit disease,” he says. “The most common carrier for human infection is the mosquito, which transmits malaria, West Nile virus and yellow fever.”

Many times, our immune system will clear up the infection before it progresses to a more serious state.

“Infection does not necessarily lead to disease,” says Slotar. “Disease typically occurs when the cells of the body are damaged as a result of infection, leading to signs and symptoms of an illness.”



To help our immune system do its job, there are several actions we can take that can decrease exposure to germs and empower our body.

“There is an invisible war going on all around us: a fight against a vast array of viruses and bacteria, threatening our health and well-being.”

“One of the best things people can do to prevent infection is to limit exposure to different germs,” says Wilkins. “This includes trying to limit touching objects that are commonly used by others, washing hands often and avoiding touching your face, especially the eyes and mouth. Also, staying home when you are ill and staying away from others who are sick, can keep germs from spreading.”

Wilkins also suggests maintaining certain habits to stay healthy and prevent infection.

“Getting at least seven to nine hours of sleep each night, eating healthy foods including fruits and



Above Left: Family Medicine Physician Thomas Wilkins, DO, on the medical staff at Community Hospital, Munster, and St. Catherine Hospital, East Chicago, says the immune system is built of a network of different types of cells and organs that all interact to provide many forms of protection.

Above Right: Infectious Disease Physician Dylan Slotar, MD, on the medical staff at Community Hospital, St. Catherine Hospital and St. Mary Medical Center, says disease typically occurs when the cells of the body are damaged as a result of infection, leading to signs and symptoms of an illness.

vegetables and exercising all help boost the immune system,” he says. “Staying up-to-date on vaccines will allow the immune system to create a ‘memory’ of the germs. Vaccines prepare your immune system to fight the illness before you are exposed.”

Wilkins also encourages annual wellness exams with a primary care provider.

“It is important to see a doctor at least once a year to ensure you are healthy. These visits can help detect health conditions such as high blood pressure or diabetes early to make sure they are controlled which keeps the immune system stronger.” ■

Annual Wellness Exams

To find a provider near you, visit [COMHS.org/find-a-doctor](https://www.comhs.org/find-a-doctor).





Nurturing the Future of Healthcare

Community Healthcare System offers many opportunities for career development

by Karin Saltanovitz

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 has affected all sectors and has reshaped the way we live our lives and conduct business. For the healthcare industry, the global pandemic accelerated the need for critical care providers and clinical support, including respiratory therapists and nursing assistants. Other more behind-the-scene positions such as technical support, environmental services and hospitality and nutrition service staff, also are critical for providing optimal care for patients.

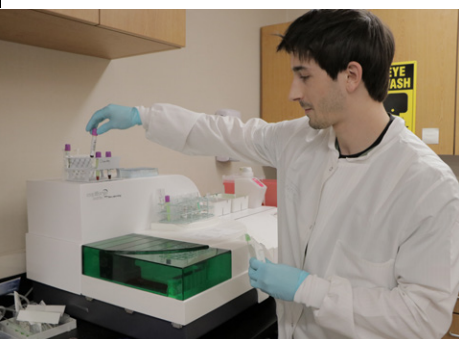
“Healthcare continues to evolve and so does the workforce of our healthcare system,” says Tony

Ferracane, vice president, Human Resources for Community Foundation of Northwest Indiana, Inc. (the parent company to the hospitals of Community Healthcare System). “Advancements in technology from telemedicine to electronic medical records such as MyChart, put data at the patients’ fingertips and increase the involvement of the patient, caretaker and healthcare professionals. With this information, new roles have evolved to interact with patients in ways never imagined in the past.”

The hospitals of Community Healthcare System: Community Hospital, Munster; St. Catherine Hospital, East Chicago; St. Mary Medical Center, Hobart, and Community Stroke & Rehabilitation Center,

Left: The Clinical Assistant program is designed to help prepare students interested in the healthcare field for a career in Laboratory Services. Graduates of the class of 2019 include Anastasia Cordova, Sanya Rivera, Stacie Wallace and Clara Yos.

Below: Designed for baccalaureate graduates in the sciences, the School of Medical Laboratory course includes 22 weeks of classroom instruction. After graduating from the program in 2018, Joseph Lucente (below left) accepted a job in the lab at St. Catherine Hospital and Shantelle Williams (below right) started in the laboratory at Community Hospital.



Crown Point, remain focused on talent acquisition and retention by fostering a supportive environment that encourages professional growth.

“There are so many positions in healthcare that an individual can start in one field and progress to other areas,” says Sharron Catania, director of Human Resources for St. Mary Medical Center and Community Stroke & Rehabilitation Center. “For example, a nurse may start his or her career working with inpatient care and transition to management, information technology or a specialized medical field.”

Community Healthcare System takes a proactive approach to filling in-demand jobs, both now and in the future. That is something Kathleen Roque, a recruiter at St. Catherine Hospital, shares with potential job candidates.

“We cross-train our nurses and patient care technicians and collaborate with our system-wide education departments and seasoned nurses to help new healthcare professionals build upon their skillset,” Roque says.

As one of Northwest Indiana’s largest single employers, Community Healthcare System is committed to offering employees new opportunities.

“We have many successful career advancement programs our

staff can take advantage of,” says Debbie Brandt, director of Human Resources for Community Hospital. Ferracane agrees.

“Community Healthcare System fosters the aspirations of anyone who wants to make a difference and lasting contribution to their community,” he says.

These are a few of the professional development programs available to prospective employees:

Nursing Assistant Training Program

This five week program prepares beginning level nurse assistants to function as members of the healthcare team under the supervision of a licensed registered nurse.

Medical Laboratory Science

Designed for baccalaureate graduates in the sciences, the School of Medical Laboratory

course includes 22 weeks of classroom instruction. A career in Medical Laboratory Science involves testing of blood and body fluid specimens using complex chemistry analyzers; microscopic examination of blood cells; identification of pathogenic organisms causing infection, immunological evaluations and preparation of blood products for lifesaving transfusions.


Clinical Lab Assistant

The 12 week Clinical Assistant program serves as a way to cultivate and fill entry level positions with well qualified candidates in the hospital laboratories. Clinical assistants handle patient registration, specimen collection, take vital signs and administer EKGs among other tasks.

Pharmacy Technician

Community Healthcare System’s Pharmacy Technician program is for individuals seeking a career in the pharmacy profession. Experienced pharmacy technicians and pharmacists serve as designated trainers, guiding the students through real time daily processes for a practical pharmacy experience. After completing the 10 week program, graduates are prepared to take a national certification exam.

These programs serve as a pipeline to generate new staff. After graduation, the majority of these trainees get hired by the hospitals of the Community Healthcare System. ■

Interested in a Career? 

For more information on career opportunities and professional development with the hospitals of Community Healthcare System, visit COMHS.org/careers

New Hope

in the fight against Lung Cancer

Community Healthcare System is named lung cancer Center of Excellence

by Debra Gruszecki

GILBERTO Lopez, 61, cast fishing lines into Wolf Lake all summer to celebrate a one year milestone in his treatment of advanced stage lung cancer.

“My last rounds of chemotherapy were rough, but I got through it,” Lopez says, as he slipped bait on a hook to angle for freshwater fish. “I got my ‘cat’ scan in July with no sign of cancer, nothing in my lungs, abdomen or blood work. Everything is good.”

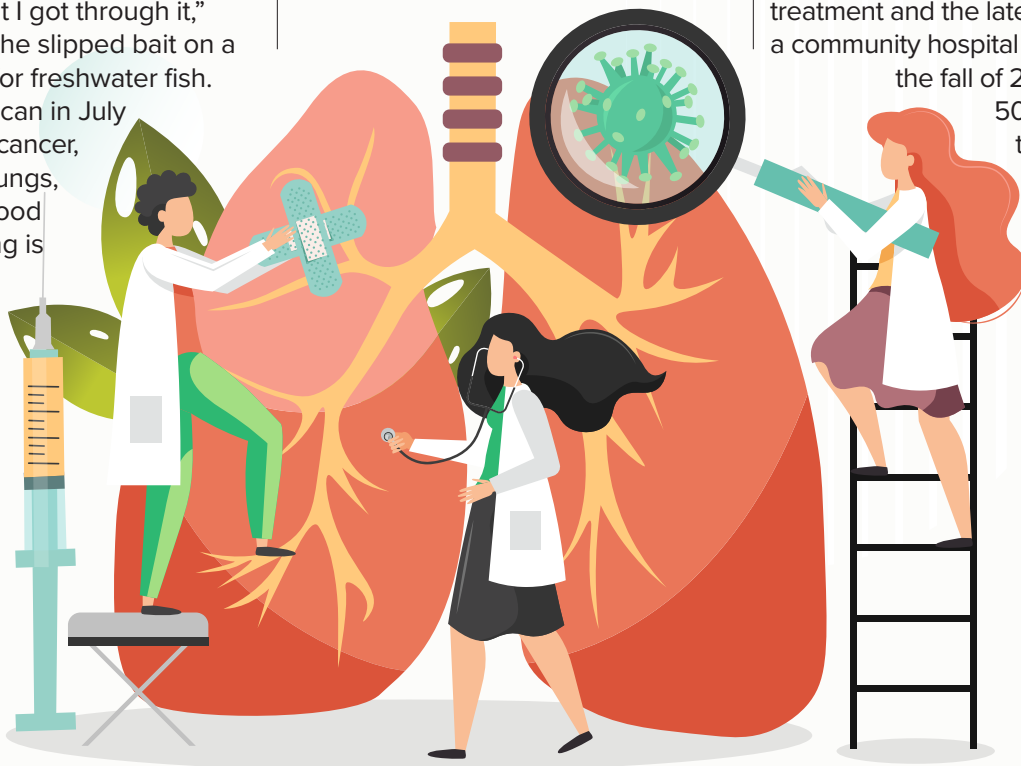
Lopez is quick to give credit to Community Healthcare System’s Centers of Excellence for Lung Cancer for being able to tell his story today. Community Healthcare System hospitals are designated as Care Continuum Centers of Excellence for Lung Cancer by the GO₂ Foundation.

“I had a lot of confidence in my doctors,” Lopez, the retired security

officer from East Chicago, says. “Getting great care so close to home has meant the world to me.”

Co-founder, president and chief executive of GO₂ Foundation for Lung Cancer, Laurie Fenton Ambrose says the foundation formed the quality program to enable patients to have access to patient focused care, a multi-disciplinary team approach to treatment and the latest innovations in a community hospital setting. Since

the fall of 2020, fewer than 50 hospitals across the U.S. had attained the



Care Continuum Center of Excellence (CCCOE) seal from the GO₂ Foundation for Lung Cancer.

The designation puts lung cancer care by Community Hospital in Munster, St. Mary Medical Center in Hobart and St. Catherine Hospital in East Chicago on par with large academic and research institutions, Ambrose says.

“We are proud of our team, our early lung cancer detection programs, treatment and patient protocols, as well as the impact we are having for residents in our local communities,” says Marie Duval Macke, service line administrator for oncology.

Radiologist Jonathon Lee, MD, goes on to say that the hospitals of Community Healthcare System are unparalleled in detecting lung cancer in the early stages and in providing a unified treatment plan using advanced technologies.

This means all hospitals in the system, including Community Stroke & Rehabilitation Center in Crown Point, work together toward quality outcomes and are deemed centers of excellence by the GO₂ Foundation. As part of that high quality approach, Community Healthcare System in April acquired the first Computer-Aided Digital (CAD) lung cancer detection system in Northwest Indiana.

“This is a form of artificial intelligence in radiology,” Lee explains. “It helps our radiologists detect 20 to 30 percent more lung nodules that may have been overlooked by the human eye. It will also help us track smaller nodules in the lungs to see if they enlarge over time.”

A unique lung cancer biopsy system also is in place to ensure pathologists make an accurate diagnosis, reducing the need for a second biopsy. Having an initial diagnostic rate that is above the



national average for CT-guided lung biopsies helps quicken the pace to get a patient started on their treatment.

Cardiothoracic and cardiovascular surgeon Jason Frazier, MD, physician champion in the Center of Excellence for Lung Cancer, performed two minimally invasive robotic surgeries on Lopez in 2019. He used a bronchoscopy technique that helped him navigate accurately to the cancerous nodules, perform the biopsy and mark the tumors for surgery.

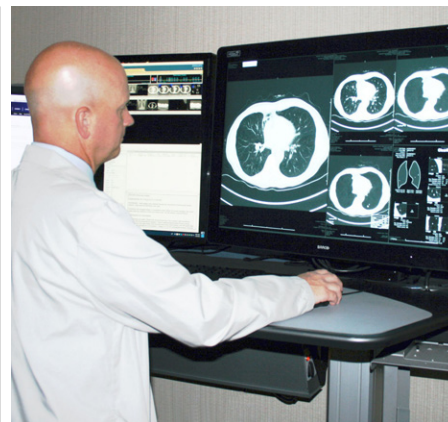
Lopez had cancerous nodules removed from one lung in April; the other lung in May. Chemotherapy began in July in the newly built cancer and infusion center at St. Catherine Hospital.

The multidisciplinary care model in the CCCOE program includes nodule follow-up programs, tumor genetic testing, access to clinical trials, new targeted therapies and immunotherapies and extensive patient education and support.

Surgeons, oncologists, radiologists, pathologists and other medical providers hold conferences routinely to review patient cases and discuss a proactive treatment plan through all lines of therapy.

Cancer Resources and Clinical Trials manager Roxy Propeck says lung cancer navigators follow the patient from the point of diagnosis through treatment.

“It’s tricky navigating a health system in the best of circumstances,”



Above Left: After successfully completing chemotherapy at St. Catherine Hospital for advanced stage lung cancer, Gilberto Lopez headed to his secret spot off Lake Michigan to catch some fish.

Above Right: CT Lung CAD (Computer Aided Detection) is helping Community Healthcare System radiologists, like Justin Spackey, MD, accurately detect lung cancer earlier than before by providing a second set of eyes.

Propeck says. “Having someone at your side to help patients interpret what they’ve been told, get appointments scheduled with their specialists and help move them through the process with few delays helps them have better outcomes.”

Time is critical, and a navigator makes sure no time is wasted.

“Our commitment extends from an initial diagnosis through to the treatment of lung cancer. An entire hospital system is with them to make sure that they get the best possible care available,” says Macke. “At Community Healthcare System, each lung cancer patients’ journey becomes our journey every step of the way.” ■

Lung Cancer Care



To schedule a lung screening, call 219-703-2032. To learn more about lung cancer care at Community Healthcare System, visit COMHS.org/cancer.

Help for Stroke

is on the way

SHAUNA GHOLSON says that she is alive today because of her family's quick actions. A daily phone call to her sisters saved her life.

Even though they are separated by miles (Gholson lives in Hobart and her sisters live in Sacramento, CA, and Salt Lake City, UT), they stay close with daily calls. Gholson was on one of these calls with her sisters this past June when she had a stroke.

"My sisters asked what was wrong with me," Gholson says. "They both said I was slurring my words."

Gholson's sisters called the police, an ambulance and her son then stayed on the phone until help arrived. Her sisters could hear crashing noises as Gholson dropped her drink, her plate of food, hit a table, then a chair and finally the wall. When her son got there, he took one look at her and told her that her face was drooping.

"I don't remember much after that," Gholson says. "But I do remember that my nurses told me that my sisters saved my life. When I told them that, they said, 'We didn't save your life, God saved your life. He had a way of letting us know there was something wrong.'"

Community Hospital, Munster; St. Catherine Hospital, East Chicago, and St. Mary Medical Center,



For lifesaving care,
count on the hospitals of
Community Healthcare System

by Elise Sims

Hobart, have been awarded Get With The Guidelines® Gold Plus and Silver Plus Stroke Quality Achievement Awards for their work to optimize the care of stroke patients. These high honors affirm that the hospitals' advanced stroke teams unite in expertise to alert, assess and determine a plan of care and treatment within minutes.

Stroke is the number five cause of death and a leading cause of adult disability in the United States, according to the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association. About 85 percent of

all strokes are caused by an obstruction within a vessel supplying blood to the brain. A loss of oxygen and nutrients causes brain cells to die. Physical disabilities as well as difficulty with thinking and speaking may result from damage to the brain. Research shows that timely intervention to remove the blockage is the most effective treatment.

EMS called a stroke alert from the field. St. Mary Medical Center, a Primary Stroke Center, was notified that Gholson was on her way.

Through stroke legislation passed in the State of Indiana, Emergency Medical Service (EMS) use established rapid triage and transfer protocols to take patients to the closest hospital best equipped to treat the appropriate level of stroke symptoms.

St. Mary Medical Center's stroke team was in place upon Gholson's arrival and she immediately underwent a CT scan. Through telestroke technology (stroke telemedicine), board certified vascular neurologists from Community Healthcare System are brought to the patient's bedside for a stroke assessment through a mobile video robotic system.

Gholson was well within the 4.5 hour window of symptom onset and St. Mary Medical Center's Emergency Department doctors administered the IV tissue plasminogen activators or tPA. This protein works to break down blood clots. However, even with medication, some clots require a higher level of intervention.

Gholson was airlifted by helicopter to sister hospital and Comprehensive Stroke Center at Community Hospital in Munster for complex surgery. Recognized with a Target Stroke Advanced Therapy award, Community Hospital has a state-of-the-art hybrid operating room with the necessary tools and technology for this type of surgery.

Specialist Sherman Chen, MD, neuroendovascular neurologist on staff at the hospitals of Community Healthcare System says that Gholson's right sided blockage required a surgical procedure called a mechanical thrombectomy (MT).

"During MT, also called endovascular therapy, we use a special device that is threaded

Right: Shauna Gholson is grateful to be suffering no ill effects after a stroke this past June. From Gholson's admission to St. Mary Medical Center and surgical intervention at Community Hospital, the entire treatment process took only 1 hour and 45 minutes (door-to-surgical intervention time). Her outlook for a full recovery is good thanks to a well-coordinated effort between the hospitals of Community Healthcare System.

Below: Sherman Chen, MD, says that knowing the time of symptom onset helps healthcare providers know which treatment route to take in case of stroke.



through the blood vessels to the site of the stroke causing blood clot in the brain," he says. "The device captures the clot and then we can remove it, restoring blood flow to the brain."

From Gholson's admission to St. Mary Medical Center and surgical intervention at Community Hospital, the entire treatment process took 1 hour and 45 minutes (door-to-surgical intervention time). Her outlook for a full recovery is good.

"The most important thing the public needs to know is not only the signs and symptoms of a stroke and to call 911 immediately, but also to have a clear time of symptom onset," Chen says. "Knowing the time that Shauna's symptoms started enables healthcare providers to know what treatment route to take for the stroke."

"As a system, we are united in the battle against stroke," says Jill Conner, RN, administrative director of Neuroscience, Cerebrovascular and Structural Heart Services. "Working with our EMS providers and our healthcare colleagues across Northwest Indiana, we are able to significantly improve the outcomes of patients who have had an acute ischemic or hemorrhagic stroke." ■

Stroke Care at CHS



For more information about stroke care at the hospitals of Community Healthcare System, visit [COMHS.org/stroke](https://www.comhs.org/stroke).

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



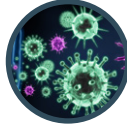
Melissa Etheridge



Breast Cancer



A Lifetime of Care





Our Immune System



Good News: Women's Health Is Improving!

 Life expectancy for women has increased from 78 to 81 years over a recent 30-year period.

 During that same period, the number of women 50 and older who reported receiving a mammogram has increased from 27 to 72 percent.

 The number of adult women who smoke has dramatically dropped from 28 to 16 percent.

 Breast cancer death rates decreased 40 percent from 1989 to 2017.

 The five-year survival rate for breast cancer is now 90 percent.

* 1984-2014

Sources: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, American Cancer Society, U.S. News & World Report



WOMEN'S HEALTH QUIZ

Test your knowledge about women's health. Answer these six questions True or False and check out how you did below.

- T F 1) Half of all women over age 50 will suffer a bone fracture caused in part by osteoporosis.
- T F 2) Most lumps in the breast are cancer.
- T F 3) Cancer is the leading cause of death in women.
- T F 4) Women are less likely to suffer from an autoimmune disease, such as rheumatoid arthritis, lupus and Crohn's disease, than men.
- T F 5) Physical exercise can reduce the risk of osteoporosis.
- T F 6) Women don't have to worry about breast cancer if there is no family history of the disease.

ANSWERS:

- 1) TRUE.** Talk to your provider about having a bone density test which can detect osteoporosis, a medical condition that causes bones to weaken.
- 2) FALSE.** Many women have lumps caused by a build up of scar tissue or by fluid-filled sacs called cysts. A new lump or mass is more likely to be cancerous if it is hard, painless and has rough edges.
- 3) FALSE.** Heart disease accounts for more deaths among women each year than all cancers combined.
- 4) FALSE.** In fact, nearly 78 percent of autoimmune cases are women.
- 5) TRUE.** Weight-bearing exercise such as walking can increase muscle strength and maintain bone density.
- 6) FALSE.** In fact, nearly 80 percent of women diagnosed with breast cancer had no family history.

Sources: American Cancer Society, webMD