

## Making healthy 'midlife' choices

Thursday October 8 2009

YOUR HEALTH MATTERS With Headwaters

The start of midlife is different for everyone. For some it is a state-of-mind, while for others it is an actual number. When it comes to managing your health, there are a number of preventative things you can do, including exercise, good nutrition and making healthy lifestyle choices. It is also important to have certain medical tests when you reach "midlife."

### Early detection saves lives

Women age 40 and over, or those with a family history of breast cancer, are urged to get an annual mammogram. Headwaters Health Care Centre offers digital mammography, which takes a clearer picture in half the time of film mammograms and uses a lower dose of radiation. It is more effective than film mammography for women under the age of 50 or any age with dense breasts. If an abnormal mass is detected, you can elect to have a Stereotactic Breast Biopsy instead of surgery to determine a diagnosis.

Your family doctor may also recommend a bone density scan to measure your bone density and determine fracture risk for Osteoporosis. At about age 35 your bone mass peaks and all adults start to lose calcium, causing bones to weaken.

Both men and women over the age of 50 should be screened for colorectal cancer — the second leading cause of cancer death. Your family doctor will take a fecal occult blood test (FOBT) to detect any trace amounts of blood in the stool that are invisible to the naked eye.

Two percent of individuals will test positive and require a colonoscopy for further investigation. If you have a family history of the disease, speak with your family doctor about the appropriate time for your first colonoscopy. With early detection colorectal cancer has a 90 per cent chance of a cure.

Men over 50 are also recommended to speak to their family doctor about having a prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test. Results of a single total prostate-specific antigen (tPSA) test, done between the ages of 44 and 50, can reliably predict prostate cancer up to 20 years afterward.

If you are diagnosed with prostate cancer, your oncologist may order a nuclear medicine scan at Headwaters Health Care Centre to pinpoint and stage metastatic bone lesions and soft tissue tumors. Early detection will allow you to begin treatment follow-up.

*Your Health Matters is a column dealing with health and healthy lifestyles in this community.*