



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Jim Doyle, Governor
Karen E. Timberlake, Secretary

For Immediate Release

September 9, 2008

Contact: Stephanie Marquis, (608) 266-1683

Early Prostate Cancer Detection Can Save Lives

State health officials are urging men age 50 and older to discuss prostate cancer with their doctor. Three of the four main risk factors for prostate cancer are not preventable (age, race, family history), so early detection through screening provides the best opportunity to ensure high survival. The most recent state report, *Wisconsin Cancer Incidence and Mortality, 2000-2004*, shows that more than three-fourths of prostate cancers were detected early.

“Cancer touches everyone’s lives. Most of us have known someone who’s been diagnosed with cancer,” said Secretary Karen Timberlake. “The main risk factor for prostate cancer is age. Therefore, all men age 50 and older should discuss screening options with their doctor. Early detection has the potential to increase survival and treatment options.”

Men at high risk of prostate cancer should start discussing the benefits of testing with their doctor at age 45. Those who are at high risk include African American men and men who have a first-degree relative – father, brother, or son – diagnosed with prostate cancer at an early age (younger than age 65).

In 2004, approximately 3,900 Wisconsin men were diagnosed with prostate cancer and more than 650 died from the disease. Nationally, prostate cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in men and it’s expected that more than 230,000 new cases of prostate cancer will be diagnosed this year alone. There is often no way to detect prostate cancer in its early stages except through a Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) blood test and a Digital Rectal Exam (DRE) done by a trained professional.

Other types of cancer are also detectable at an early stage by screening tests. The *Wisconsin Cancer Incidence and Mortality, 2000-2004*, also showed:

- Only 37 percent of colorectal cancers were detected early (at a localized stage)
- 62 percent of breast cancers were detected early
- Approximately half of invasive cervical cancers were detected early
- Only 20 percent of lung cancers were detected early

Colorectal Cancer. Survival from colorectal cancer is more than 90 percent when the cancer is diagnosed before it has extended beyond the intestinal wall. Colorectal cancer develops slowly over a period of several years. Before cancer develops there are usually precancerous growths called polyps.

The American Cancer Society recommends screening beginning at age 50. Colorectal cancers can almost always be cured if detected early. There is a 90 percent chance of survival five years after diagnosis if a patient is diagnosed at the earliest stage. Therefore, it is important for all adults aged 50 and older (at average risk) to follow the American Cancer Society’s screening guidelines.

- MORE -

Individuals are considered at higher risk if there is: a family history of colorectal cancer or adenomatous polyps in a first-degree relative; a personal history of colorectal cancer, polyps, or chronic inflammatory bowel disease; or a family history of hereditary colorectal cancer syndrome. Higher risk individuals should consider screening prior to age 50.

Breast Cancer. The majority of breast cancers can be treated successfully if detected early. An annual mammogram from age 40 and older is the most effective way to detect breast cancer at an early, curable stage. Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in Wisconsin, regardless of race. Breast cancer accounts for nearly one-third of all cancers diagnosed in women. Early detection through mammography screening provides the best chance of discovering breast cancer at an early stage and increasing survival. The national five-year relative survival rate for women diagnosed with breast cancer at the local stage was 98 percent in 1996-2002.

Cervical Cancer. Nationally, cervical cancer incidence and mortality rates decreased 67 percent over the past three decades with most of the reduction attributed to the Pap test. Approximately 95 percent of Wisconsin women have had a Pap test at some time in their lives. Early stage invasive cervical cancer is one of the most successfully treatable cancers. Nationally, the five-year relative survival rate for women diagnosed at a local stage was 92 percent in 1996-2002.

An annual Pap test and pelvic examination are recommended for women 18 and older or women who are sexually active. Pap tests can detect pre-cancers, allowing for treatment before cervical cancer develops. Signs and symptoms of cervical cancer include abnormal vaginal discharge and abnormal vaginal bleeding or spotting.

Lung Cancer. More people die from lung cancer than from breast, prostate and colorectal cancers combined. Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths among both males and females in Wisconsin, but is most often diagnosed at a later stage. Survival is highest if lung cancer is diagnosed early, with a 49 percent five-year survival rate for lung cancers diagnosed at the local stage. However, only 21 percent of lung cancers in Wisconsin were diagnosed at this stage in 2003.

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable deaths in Wisconsin and the United States. The best way to avoid lung cancer is to not start using tobacco or to quit if you do use it. If you smoke, your doctor can suggest ways to help you kick the habit or you can call the Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line (1-800-QUIT-NOW) for information on treatments that can help you quit.

For more information about cancer, go to:

- *Wisconsin Cancer Incidence and Mortality, 2000-2004* <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/wcrs/pubs.htm>
- *American Cancer Society: Wisconsin Cancer Facts and Figures, 2007* <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/wcrs/pubs.htm>

- END -