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MEDIA RELEASE

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Contact: Jeremy Otto, Marketing & Public Information Officer, jotto@cghealth.com, 641-421-9333

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month – Lower Your Risk

(Mason City) – CG Public Health is joining partners across Iowa to raise awareness about breast cancer risks and to encourage timely screening during Breast Cancer Awareness Month. According to the Iowa Cancer Registry, breast cancer has the highest incidence of all cancers in Iowa and accounts for a significant share of new diagnoses each year. Screening helps find cancers earlier, when treatment is more effective.

When to get screened. For people at average risk, the American Cancer Society recommends annual mammograms from ages 45 to 54, then every other year starting at 55, with the option to continue yearly. Individuals at higher risk, including those with certain gene mutations or a strong family history, should ask their provider about earlier or additional screening.

“No one should skip screening because of cost,” said Penny McCaslin. “Our Care For Yourself program helps eligible Iowans access **free breast and cervical cancer screenings**. Call us, and we will walk you through options and eligibility.”

Know your risk. Risk increases with age and can be affected by genetics, reproductive history, dense breast tissue, and family history. Lifestyle factors such as low physical activity, excess weight, and alcohol use can also raise risk. Having one or more risk factors does not mean you will develop cancer, but it does make screening and prevention even more important.

“Screening saves lives. If you are due for a mammogram, make the appointment, and if you have questions about your risk, talk with your healthcare provider,” said Penny McCaslin, Care for Yourself coordinator at CG Public Health.

Care For Yourself: Help is available. Iowans can learn about eligibility and enroll by calling 866-339-7909 to speak confidentially with a coordinator. Local support is also available through CG Public Health at 641-421-9300.

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