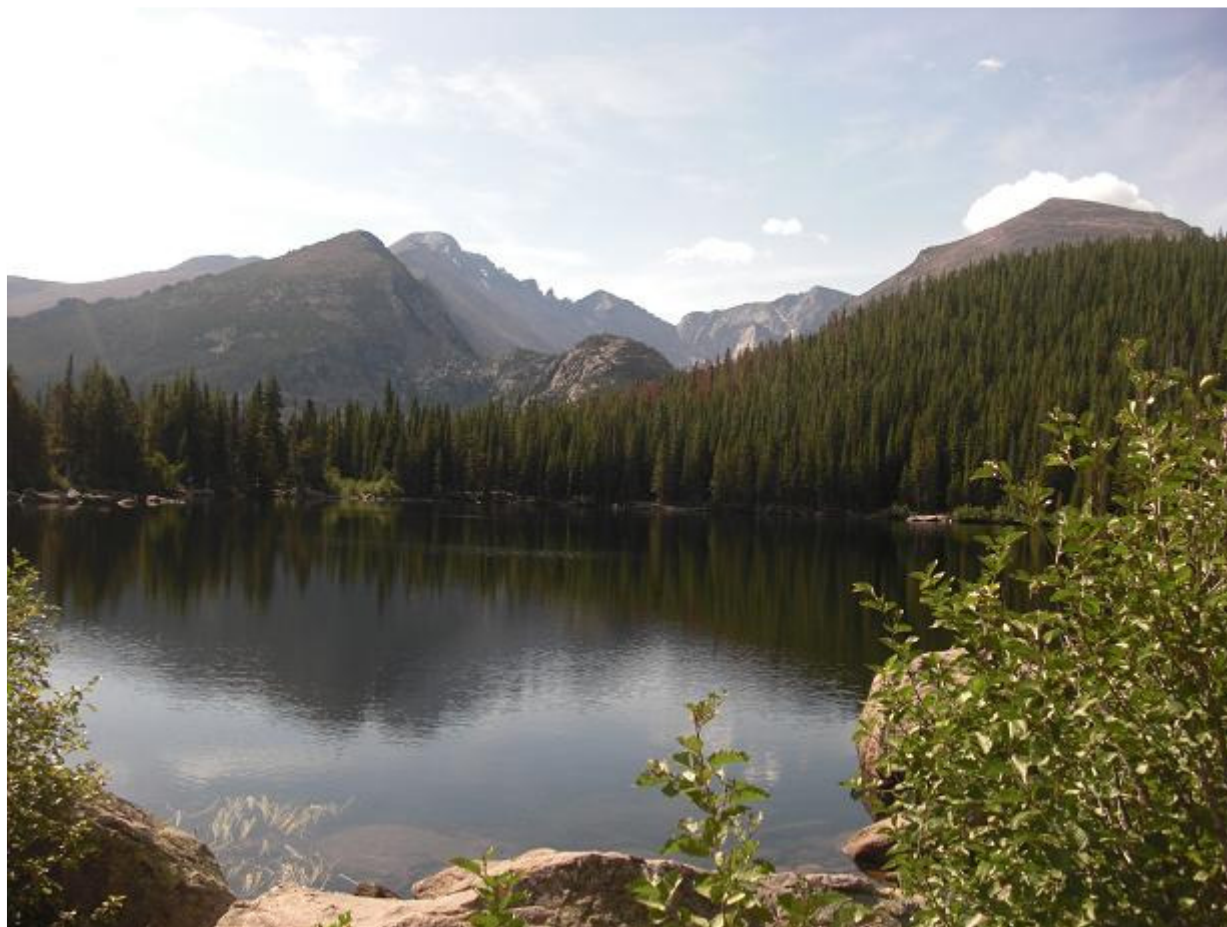


# News from Northside Family Medicine!




## Flu Vaccine has arrived!

We would recommend coming in to get it as soon as possible as supply for flu shot has been unreliable in the past. The CDC is recommending flu shots as soon as you can get one as it should provide you protection throughout the flu season. Call us soon to make an appointment to come in for one! We will try to make it a topic in an upcoming newsletter.

**"Ask a doctor" is a free service through our**

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## Facebook Page!

We have now entered the social arena of the internet and are proud to offer you another resource from our office. But there hasn't been much use of it! Any time you have a general medical question feel free to contact us on Facebook. It is a free service and we'd love to hear from you. Before using our new "Ask a doctor" on Facebook make sure you review and agree to the terms as you are agreeing to them by submitting a question.

## Breast Cancer and Mammograms

Information on Mammograms- when to get them and according to who?

There has been much controversy lately with new recommendations for mammograms. I will try to sum up the information from some of the more important organizations.

Traditionally, breast cancer screening has been recommended to start at age 40 and to be done yearly as long as a patient is in good health. However, some recent studies have called into question whether there is a difference in detection between annual and biannual (every other year) mammograms and the age to start screening. Currently, the American Cancer Society still recommends the traditional approach to screening. However, the U.S. Preventative Services Task Force (USPSTF) guidelines are based on more recent studies and they recommend routine screening mammograms for average risk women beginning at age 50 and continuing every 2 years until age 74.

Part of the reason for this is that studies are suggesting that we aren't detecting enough breast cancer to outweigh the amount of

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## Prostate Cancer- PART 2-How to make an educated decision on cancer screening

What screening tests should take place?

First, remember from the last newsletter that prostate screening has never been proven to save lives and that one treatment for most prostate cancers is no treatment at all. With that being said, if you decide to screen for prostate cancer it is best to do both a psa (prostate specific antigen) blood test and a rectal exam to look at the size of the prostate gland and to notice any abnormalities or nodules on the prostate. Neither test is perfect in fact both have a good number of false positive tests which end up causing a lot of concern from a patient and can lead

radiation exposure of yearly mammograms. To date, most physicians are still adhering to recommending yearly mammograms but new studies are causing us to ask important questions.

Unfortunately, as in many areas of medicine, the answer isn't clear cut. The recent data suggests the risks don't outweigh the benefits of yearly mammograms and one every other year is a better idea. However, most physicians can tell you of at least 1 or 2 women in their 40s where cancer was detected on a mammogram when the previous mammogram only a year before showed no problems. So the choice again is a personal one but every other year doesn't seem unreasonable.

#### KEEP ALL THE FOLLOWING IN MIND ABOUT MAMMOGRAMS AS WELL-

These guidelines only apply to routine screening mammograms, if you have a lump or any suspicious finding, you should be evaluated by a healthcare provider regardless of your age. Women in their 40s should talk with their healthcare provider and make an informed decision based on their family history, general health and personal values. Still keeping up with regular monthly breast exams and yearly with a health care provider is a good idea, though proof of their help is sparse.

What about women who have risk factors or family members with breast cancer? The above guidelines do not apply to women with known risk factors for breast cancer including BRCA mutations or a close family history of the disease. If you fall into this category, you should discuss this with your healthcare provider. High risk women may benefit from earlier

to many unnecessary prostate biopsies.

#### What is a PSA?

A prostate specific antigen is a screening test for cancer that can be checked by a simple blood test. The problem with the test is that cancer is not the only thing that can elevate a PSA- it can be increased by multiple other causes that are not cancer! Furthermore, there are approximately 10-15% of prostate cancers that are still in the normal range of PSAs- so we try to watch a psa over a several year period of time to notice rapid changes in the PSA level as another means to suggest a risk for prostate cancer.

Is a prostate exam a reliable test?

The short answer to this is that it is again an imperfect test. There can be differences between different examiners and it can easily miss cancer as well as generate false positive tests. So again it should be done in conjunction with psa as each may detect or miss cancer that the other one could catch or miss.

initiation of early detection testing and/or the addition of breast ultrasound or breast MRI.

What about the cost of mammograms?

Did you know that the state of Colorado has a law that requires private health insurance companies, Medicaid, and public employee health plans to provide coverage for a baseline screening mammogram for women ages 35-39, every 2 years for women in their 40s, and yearly for women aged 50+, or based on physician recommendation. If you don't have insurance, reduced cost mammograms are available at the Tri-County Health Department. Contact the office with any questions or concerns.

## **Online scheduling and same day appointments a big hit at Northside Family Medicine.**

Many of our patients are already taking advantage of online scheduling. If you forget to call during office hours or run into a problem in the middle of the night and want to make sure you get an appointment the next day you can schedule it online. Even if an appointment isn't available online just call us after 830AM and before 3PM on a normal business day and we'll get you in that day. Any time of the day just go to our website [www.northsidefammed.com](http://www.northsidefammed.com) and follow the easy instructions to schedule online any time.

What is the next step if my psa is elevated or a prostate nodule is found?

The next step is usually to see a urologist and they will likely repeat both tests and then will likely consider a biopsy of the prostate using an ultrasound probe that is inserted in the rectum to guide needle biopsies of the prostate to see if there are signs of cancer in the prostate. Further testing or follow up from that point is generally decided between you and your urologist but coming back to our office to discuss the results and your options is never a bad idea.

Does Prostate cancer run in families?

Yes! But data suggests it is likely a combination of your genes (the actual genetic information you get from your parents) as well as environmental conditions (ie eating similar things that your family does and having the same exercise patterns etc) also places you at higher or lower risks of prostate cancer. We know both aspects play a role in your risk of prostate cancer but how much and necessarily how is not as clear at this point so earlier screening for prostate

cancer if your family member had prostate cancer would be a good idea as well.

## More newsletters are on the way!

This is our Third newsletter and trying to touch on important topics for lots of our patients. But please let us know if you have other thoughts or things you would like to include. We'd love to hear from you!

**The greatest compliment you could ever give us is the referral of your family and friends. We thank you for your trust. Northside Family Medicine**

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from ac- up to 4/15/10 last 18 months



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