

# One Call, One Visit, Three Screenings

## Jefferson Makes It Easy for Women to Prioritize Cancer Prevention

Fifty-four-year-old Joyce scheduled three colonoscopies last year. She canceled all of them.

“To this day, I still haven’t had one,” she says, explaining that the procedure seems much more complicated and invasive than her regular Pap tests and mammograms. “It’s just not something I’ve found time for. And I feel fine.”

Marianne Ritchie, MD ’80, hears stories like Joyce’s every day. Women tell her they can’t take time off work, especially if they’ve already done so for routine breast and gynecological exams; they view colon cancer as a men’s disease; or they don’t have a family history so they don’t feel at risk.

Ritchie, an assistant professor in Jefferson’s Department of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, is discouraged by the figures: Colon cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in both men and women, whose risk of developing the disease is fairly even — but while 70 percent of men undergo colonoscopies, only about 45 percent of women do.

To encourage women to pursue all of the cancer screenings they need, she has created a program that bundles the procedures and makes them more convenient and accessible. Introduced in fall 2012, Ritchie’s program offers multiple screenings in one visit to Jefferson. Every Thursday evening, patients coming in for a mammogram can also meet with her for a “colonoscopy pre-screening.” The third Thursday of each month, a gynecologist is also on hand to perform Pap tests in the same office.

“I don’t actually do colonoscopies at night, but building a relationship with women is key to getting them to follow through with the procedure. I take the time to fully explain colonoscopy benefits, risks and prep, whereas if they scheduled over the phone these things might not get explained very well, and they’re more likely to prep poorly or to get nervous and cancel,” Ritchie says. The visit also allows her to assess family history, potential existing symptoms and whether a patient is healthy enough for anesthesia.

The program is now offered Thursday mornings at Methodist Hospital in South Philadelphia, too.

“The beauty of bundling these screenings together is convenience — only one trip through traffic, one parking payment and less time visiting different offices. Nobody else does these screenings all in one place.” Ritchie says.

“But this goes beyond convenience. It’s about information. For example, we inform women that if they have had uterine or ovarian cancer, it bumps their risk for colon cancer. Gynecological cancers and colon cancers are related risks, which many people do not realize.”

Ritchie is also actively promoting cancer prevention and early detection throughout the community. She travels to give a presentation called “Decades of Do’s and Don’ts: A Diva’s Guide to Cancer Prevention” at area corporations and colleges.

Her talk outlines ways women can decrease their risks for all cancers during every decade of life.

“From wearing sunscreen as a child to getting colonoscopies in your fifties and beyond, women need to know everything they can do for prevention,” she says. “Mammograms pick up early breast cancer. Pap tests detect pre-cancerous cells on the cervix, and colonoscopies pick up polyps that are pre-cancer. Isn’t it easier to get these screenings than to end up facing cancer, surgery, chemotherapy, radiation and hospital stays?”

— *Karen L. Brooks*



### Women’s Cancer Screening Program

- Care provided by women clinicians
- Test results provided promptly
- Summary letter sent to primary-care physician
- Patients can call 215-952-1234 to schedule an appointment

**Jefferson Breast Care Center**  
Medical Office Building, 1100 Walnut Street, 3rd Floor  
Thursdays from 5 to 6:30 p.m.

**Methodist Hospital Women’s Diagnostic Center**  
2301 S. Broad Street, 2nd Floor  
Thursdays from 8 a.m. to noon

*For more information or to invite Dr. Ritchie to present at your institution, email [marianne.ritchie@jefferson.edu](mailto:marianne.ritchie@jefferson.edu).*