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Health Plan of San Joaquin asks: Do you know the warning signs of breast cancer?

"Ask a woman to name a sign or symptom of breast cancer, and chances are she'd say a lump in the breast," said HPSJ Health Promotions and Cultural & Linguistics Manager Jenny Dominguez, MPH. Dominguez goes on: "She'd be right, of course. A new lump or mass is the most common symptom of breast cancer. But it's not the only one. And because it's best to find breast cancer early, it's important to know all the possible signs and symptoms of the disease." This is what Health Plan of San Joaquin (HPSJ) recommends: Stay alert. Being familiar with how your breasts look and feel is a key component

of breast health. If you notice any of the following signs or symptoms in a breast, you should see a doctor right away:

- A lump. Cancerous breast lumps tend to be hard, painless, and irregular (rather than rounded) around the edges.
- Swelling of all or part of a breast—or sometimes in the armpit or collarbone area—even if you can't feel a lump.
- Irritated or dimpled breast skin.
- Breast or nipple pain.
- A nipple that points inward.
- Red, scaly or thickening nipple or breast skin.
- Nipple discharge, which may be bloody or clear.

Any of these signs and symptoms, including lumps, can be caused by things other than cancer. But only a doctor can tell for sure.

Know what happens next If you have a lump or breast change, your doctor will examine your breasts. He or she may also order tests to take a closer look. These may include a diagnostic mammogram, which is just like having a screening mammogram except more x-rays are taken; a breast ultrasound, which uses sound waves to create an image of the inside of the breast; or a biopsy to check a sample of breast tissue for cancer.

It's important to remember that breast changes are very common, and most are not cancer. But it's crucial to get any follow-up tests your doctor orders. HPSJ's advice for women: Ask your doctor or at your clinic.

San Joaquin County and over 65% in Stanislaus County. HPSJ offers a broad network of providers and works closely with doctors to develop programs and services to ensure quality health care for almost 350,000 members who are mostly working families and children, as well as seniors and disabled residents. About 158,000 HPSJ members are children, ages 0 to 19 years. www.hspj.com