

Health Tip: Breast Cancer Awareness

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October is breast cancer awareness month. Globally breast cancer affects more women than any other type of cancer and is the leading cause of cancer related deaths among women. A U.S. woman's lifetime risk of breast cancer is 1 in 8.

Breast cancer has the highest mortality rate of any cancer in women between the ages of 20 and 59.

CANCER IN AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN:

- African American women have a 31% breast cancer mortality rate-the highest of any U.S. racial or the ethnic group.
- Among women younger than 45, breast cancer incidence is higher among African American than white women.
- Younger women in general, and younger African American women in particular, are more likely to present with **triple negative subtype** of the disease, a subtype that is both more aggressive and associated with a higher mortality.
- Over the past 20 years, despite the universal drop in mortality rates, we have seen a rise in the incidence of breast cancer in African American women in particular. The mortality rate for black women diagnosed with breast cancer is **42% higher** than the comparable rate for white women. Triple negative breast cancer is diagnosed more often in American women of African descent than in those of European descent in the US.

TYPES OF BREAST CANCERS

There are many types of breast cancers, and many different ways to describe them. It's easy to get confused over a breast cancer diagnosis.

The type of breast cancer is determined by the specific cells affected in the breast. When carcinomas form in the breast, they are usually a specific type call adenocarcinoma, which starts in the cells in the ducts (milk ducts) or milk producing glands.

In situ vs, Invasive breast cancers

The type of breast cancer can also refer to whether the cancer has spread or not. **In situ** breast cancer is a cancer that starts in the milk ducts and has not grown into the rest of the breast tissue. The term **invasive** (or filtrating) breast cancer is used to describe any type of breast cancer that has spread into the surrounding breast tissue.

Inflammatory breast cancer is an uncommon type of invasive breast cancer. It accounts for about 1% to 5% of all breast cancer

MOST COMMON SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Breast lump (but not all have lumps) is the most common; located anywhere along the chest wall or under the armpit.
- Nipple bleeding or discharge with or without related pain
- Redness or swelling in any area of the breast or in one breast.
- Nipples may look “caved in” or flatter.
- Having these symptoms doesn’t necessarily mean you have cancer. Many other factors go into a diagnosis, not just outward signs.

EARLY DETECTION is the key when it comes to breast cancer treatment options.

MAMMOGRAMS are the best options for early detection of breast cancers. Screening mammograms will detect abnormalities. There may be false positives however, an abnormal mammogram will be followed up with further testing.

Risk factors:

There are certain risk factors you can’t control

- **Gender:** Women have more hormone changes (estrogen and progesterone) that increases the risk. Note: **Men have breast cancer also. 1 of every 100 men** in the USA is diagnosed with breast cancer. Many are due to the genetic mutation of the BRCA gene. The symptoms are similar to those of the woman. Men are urged to check their breast for symptoms especially if there is a family history of the disease.
- **Age:** With increase in age comes the increase in breast cancer risk
- **Personal History:** Mother, daughter or sister had breast cancer; you have a previous history of breast cancer
- **Family History** for the BRCA1 BRCA2 gene mutation
- **Onset of menses** before age 12; **menopause** after age 55
- Childbirth after age 30
- Chest radiation

Lifestyles to lower risk for breast cancer

- **Wight Control.** (Obesity is a risk factor for breast cancer)
- **Follow a healthy diet.** Avoid high saturated fat, high sugar diet. Let your diet include lots of green and yellow vegetables
- **Don’t drink or smoke**
- Be informed about birth control pills. There has been a slight increase in cancer risk (prolong use)
- Lower your stress and anxiety levels. (stress and anxiety can increase your risk)

- **Exercise regularly (aerobic)**
- **Get regular exams and screening mammograms** according to your age or risk factor recommendations

Mammogram recommendations by the American Cancer Society for those with average risk

- **40-44** years: option at woman's choice with
- **45-55**: every year
- **55 and up**: every year as long as in good health and expected to live at least 10 more years

Note* ACS does not recommend self- breast exam as a means of cancer detection. This is not useful for early detection, but it does allow a woman to notice any changes in her breast

Mammograms Schedule for those with high risk:

Yearly starting at age 30 if there is a risk of:

- 20-25% risk according to an assessment tool
- BRCA1, BRC2 by genetic testing
- 1st degree relative (parent, sibling) with BRCA gene
- Chest radiation between 10 and 30 years of age.

TREATMENT:

When a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer; her medical provider will discuss treatment options based on many factors. Such as; the type of cancer, the stage of the cancer, the woman's physical condition, age, etc

Early detection is most important in impacting the outcome of treatment.

**Information Resources: American Cancer Society, Cancer Treatments Centers of America
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