

WELL-BEING >>>

Staying healthy in body, brain, and spirit is a life-long journey. Learn strategies to improve your own well-being with steps to security, health and prosperity.



Breast Cancer Awareness



October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Other than skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common cancer among American women. In the United States, approximately 264,000 women are diagnosed with breast cancer, 42,000 women will die from the disease annually. Men can also get breast cancer, though it is not very common, about 1 in every 100 breast cancers diagnosed. While women 50 years or older are most commonly diagnosed with breast cancer, younger women may also be affected. 9% of all new breast cancer cases are found in women younger than 45 years of age. Unfortunately, breast cancer in younger women is more likely to be found at a later stage, more aggressive, and difficult to treat.

Monthly Self Breast Exam

1

Look at your breasts in the mirror.

Visually examine your breasts with your shoulders straight and your hands on your hips. If you see any of the following changes, bring them to your doctor's attention:

- Unusual size, shape or color
- Dimpling, puckering, or bulging of the skin
- Redness, soreness, rash, swelling or scaling on the skin of the breast, areola or nipple. (Some women may detect ridges or pitting resembling the skin of an orange.)



2

Raise your arms and look for the same changes.



3

Check your nipples for signs of fluid.

Look for signs of:

- Watery discharge
- Yellow fluid
- Milky discharge (for women who breastfeeding this should not cause alarm)
- Blood

4

Feel your breasts while lying down.

Examine your breast with the opposite hand. Use your finger pads together and move in a circular motion, about the size of a quarter.



5

Cover the entire breast from top to bottom, side to side — from your collarbone to the top of your abdomen, and from your armpit to your cleavage.

Be sure to use both light and firm pressure to examine all breast tissue. Start light for tissue just under the skin. When you've reached the deep tissue, you should be able to feel down to your ribcage.



Feel your breasts while standing or sitting in the shower.

Consider repeating the exam as described in Step 4 while in the shower. Many women find it easier to detect abnormalities in their breasts when their skin is wet and slippery.



Breast Cancer Risk Factors:

- Age
- Genetic Mutations (BRCA1 and 2 genes)
- Starting menstrual periods before age 12 and menopause after 55
- Dense breast tissue
- Personal history of breast cancer and certain non-cancerous breast diseases
- Family history of breast cancer specifically 1st degree relative
- Previous radiation therapy to the chest
- Not being physically active
- Being overweight/obese
- Taking hormones
- Drinking alcohol
- Reproductive history: 1st pregnancy after 30, not breastfeeding, and never having a full-term pregnancy

Symptoms of Breast Cancer:

- Lump in breast or underarm
- Thickening or swelling in part of the breast
- Irritation or dimpling of breast skin
- Redness or flaky skin in the nipple area
- Nipple discharge or blood (not breast milk)
- Change in size or shape of breast
- Pain in any area of breast



If you have any signs or symptoms that worry you, reach out to your primary care provider for guidance.

References:

<https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/>

Purdue Student Health Center
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