

# BREAST CANCER

## MYTHS & FACTS

### AGE: A MAJOR FACTOR

A woman's chance of getting breast cancer increases with age.

By age 25.....	one in 19,608
By age 30.....	one in 2,525
By age 35.....	one in 622
By age 40.....	one in 217
By age 45.....	one on 93
By age 50.....	one in 50
By age 55.....	one in 33
By age 60.....	one in 24
By age 65.....	one in 17
By age 70.....	one in 14
By age 75.....	one in 11
By age 80.....	one in 10
By age 85.....	one in 9
Ever.....	one in 8

Source: MCI Surveillance Program

Because the causes and cure of breast cancer are not fully known, many people have misconceptions about the disease. Here is what we know for sure.

#### MYTH:

*I'm only 35. Breast cancer happens only in older women.*

#### FACT:

While the risk of breast cancer increases with age, ALL women are at some risk of getting breast cancer.

#### MYTH:

*Women with a family history of breast cancer are the ones who typically get breast cancer.*

#### FACT:

Actually, a majority of women who get breast cancer have no family history of the disease. However, a woman whose mother, sister, daughter, or grandmother had breast cancer has an increased risk.

#### MYTH:

*Women with more than one risk factor are the ones who typically get breast cancer.*

#### FACT:

A majority of women diagnosed with breast cancer have no known risk factors. All women are at risk.

#### MYTH:

*If I don't have a mutated BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene, I won't get breast cancer.*

#### FACT:

Just because you do not have a mutated BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene, you can still get breast cancer. About 90-95% of women who get breast cancer actually do not have an inherited form of breast cancer, or a mutated BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene.\*

#### MYTH:

*You can prevent breast cancer.*

#### FACT:

Because the cause of breast cancer is not yet fully known, there is no way to absolutely prevent it. **Early detection and treatment are the keys to surviving breast cancer. The earlier you detect breast cancer, the easier it is to treat.**

#### MYTH:

*If I had a mammogram every year, I would be exposed to too much radiation, and that would cause cancer.*

#### FACT:

The small level of radiation from x-rays and mammograms is not enough to cause cancer.

# BREAST CANCER

## MYTHS & FACTS

Early  
Detection

is

the

Breast Cancer



Awareness

Best  
Protection

**MYTH:**

*Women with very large breasts are more likely to get breast cancer.*

**FACT:**

No. The size of the breast is not related to the development of breast cancer.

**MYTH:**

*A painful breast lump is more likely to be breast cancer.*

**FACT:**

As a breast cancer is developing in the breast, it may cause pain, although usually it does not. In the early stages of breast cancer, a woman usually is unaware of any symptoms.

**MYTH:**

*Bumping, bruising or handling of the breasts causes breast cancer.*

**FACT:**

No, breast cancer is not associated with bumping, bruising or handling the breasts in any way.

**MYTH:**

*Mammography alone is a certain way of detecting breast cancer.*

**FACT:**

Mammograms can miss breast cancer, therefore using all three exams - BSE, Clinical Breast Exam and Mammography - is the best possible approach to detecting breast cancer.

**MYTH:**

*Women who have fibrocystic changes in their breasts are at higher risk for breast cancer.*

**FACT:**

For the majority of women, fibrocystic changes are not associated with an increased risk of breast cancer.

\*NCI, 1997

# BREAST CANCER

## Women & Men

### CAN YOUNG WOMEN GET BREAST CANCER?

When it comes to breast cancer, "young" usually means anyone younger than 40 years old. Breast cancer is less common among women in this age group. In 2001, less than 5 percent of all breast cancer cases occurred in women under the age of 40.<sup>1</sup>

However, women in their twenties, and even teenagers, are being diagnosed with breast cancer. Women who are diagnosed at a younger age are more likely to have a mutated BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene. These genes are important in the development of breast cancer, and women who carry defects on either of these genes are at a greater risk of developing breast and ovarian cancer. If a woman carries the defective BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene, she may have a 50 percent to 85 percent chance of developing breast cancer in her lifetime.<sup>2</sup> So while the risk of breast cancer is generally much lower for younger women, there is still a high risk for some.

Diagnosing breast cancer in younger women can be more difficult because their breast tissue is often thicker than older women's, making mammograms less useful in this age group. Breast cancer in younger women is also very rare. Because of this, they may often be told that a lump is just a cyst and to wait and watch it, resulting in a delayed diagnosis.

Therefore, if younger women discover a lump or notice any abnormal changes in their breasts they should see a trained medical professional for a clinical breast exam. If they are not satisfied with their doctor's advice, they should get a second opinion.

Because breast cancer is so difficult to diagnose in younger women, it is especially important for them to perform monthly Breast Self-Exams (BSE).

### CAN MEN GET BREAST CANCER?

Breast cancer in men is rare, but it does happen. After all, men have breast tissue also. In fact, both girls and boys have small amounts of breast tissue at puberty. However, a girl's ovaries produce hormones which cause the breasts to grow larger, and a boy's testes produce hormones which inhibit breast tissue growth.

Fewer than 1 in 100,000 men are diagnosed with breast cancer each year.<sup>1</sup> Although it sounds like a small number, that is still roughly 1,300 men who will be diagnosed, and about 400 who will die of the disease in a given year.<sup>2</sup>

The most common symptoms of male breast cancer include a lump in the breast or a nipple abnormality. Because breast cancer is so much more common in females, many men do not even realize that they can develop this disease. Unfortunately, this can delay diagnosis and as a result, some cancers are not found until they have progressed to a later stage. However, when cancer is found at the same stage among men and women, the survival rates are similar. Because the male breast is much smaller than the female breast, it is more likely the disease will spread to the chest wall. For this reason, it is important to find the cancer early in order to successfully treat it.

The steps used to diagnose breast cancer in men are the same steps used for women. These steps include a complete medical history, breast self-exams, clinical breast exam, mammograms, nipple examination, and biopsy.

Treatments for male breast cancer are similar to the treatments used for breast cancer in women. A mastectomy, which is a surgical process to remove the cancerous tumor from the breast, is usually the treatment of choice for males with breast cancer. Chemotherapy, radiation, and hormone therapy may also be used with surgery.

# BREAST CANCER

Women & Men

## CAN YOUNG WOMEN GET BREAST CANCER?

***IF DONE REGULARLY, THE FOLLOWING EXAMS HELP TO DETECT ANY PROBLEMS EARLY, AND INCREASE THE CHANCES OF SURVIVAL.***

- **BREAST SELF-EXAM (BSE)**

Feeling the breast tissue for any changes or abnormalities; Also includes performing a visual exam of the breast area for any outwardly noticeable changes of the breast.

**WARNING SIGNS TO LOOK FOR:**

- swelling or redness of the breast
- changes in size or shape of the breast
- dimpling or puckering of the skin
- itchy sore or scaling area on the nipple
- nipple discharge
- inverted nipple (nipple faces inward)
- rashes or discoloration

**It is recommended to begin doing Breast Self-Exams (BSE) as soon as you develop breasts, or at least by the age of twenty.**

- **CLINICAL BREAST EXAM (CBE)**

This is a detection method in which your healthcare provider checks the breasts for changes or abnormalities. During a CBE, your doctor should show you the proper way to perform a BSE.

**It is recommended to have your first Clinical Breast Exam by the age of twenty. Between the ages of 20 - 39, you should have a CBE at least every three years.**

- **MAMMOGRAPHY**

A mammogram is an x-ray of the breast.

**It is recommended to have your first, baseline, mammogram at the age of 40, and once a year, thereafter.**

## CAN MEN GET BREAST CANCER?

### ***KNOWN FACTORS THAT INCREASE THE RISK OF MALE BREAST CANCER***

Several factors may increase a man's risk of getting breast cancer. Some of these have been strongly linked with breast cancer in men, others have a weaker link to breast cancer, and the specific role of others is still under research. They include:

- Getting older
- Having family members (male or female) with breast cancer, especially with a BRCA2 mutation.
- Having the chest area exposed to radiation treatment.
- Taking estrogen for a sex change.
- Having higher levels of female hormones called estrogen (common with liver diseases such as cirrhosis).
- Having a genetic condition such as Klinefelter's syndrome.

# BREAST CANCER

## TREATMENTS

Presently, there is no cure for breast cancer. There are, however, very effective treatments that work best when the cancer is found at its earliest stages. HINT: That is why it is so important to practice good breast health (BSE, CBE and Mammography) because the earlier you detect breast cancer, the easier it is to treat! Here is a brief description of some of the common breast cancer treatments:

- **SURGERY**

There are two different types of surgical procedures:

**LUMPECTOMY**

A lumpectomy is a removal of the tumor itself. The tumor is removed along with some or all of the lymph nodes. It is a common procedure for women with early stage breast cancer. By only removing the lump, the shape and appearance of the breast is not affected.

**MASTECTOMY**

A mastectomy is the removal of the skin, the nipple, all of the breast tissue and lymph nodes in the breast and underarm area. Basically, the entire breast is removed. A mastectomy is usually performed when there is extensive spread to the lymph nodes. Many women have reconstruction after a mastectomy in an effort to "re-create" a new breast.

- **RADIATION**

Radiation kills cancer cells as well as normal cells by damaging the genetic material (DNA) of the cells. It uses high energy x-rays to kill cancer cells and shrink tumors.

- **CHEMOTHERAPY**

Chemotherapy is the use of medication to kill cancer cells. Chemotherapeutic medications destroy all rapidly dividing cells.

- I inserting a needle into the vein (intravenously) or the muscle (intramuscular). It is called a systemic treatment because the medication enters the bloodstream and travels throughout the body killing cancer cells anywhere in the body.

### HIGHLIGHT BIOPSIES

Once a suspicious lump has been found, doctors may want to perform a biopsy in order to test for cancerous cells. Biopsies are great methods for determining whether a suspicious lump is either benign (non-cancerous) or malignant (cancerous). A **biopsy** is when a sample of breast tissue is removed from the breast and examined under a microscope to look for signs of cancer.

# BREAST CANCER

## HEALTHY LIVING: NUTRITION

Since the cause of breast cancer is still unknown, there is no definite prevention method. However, there are lifestyle choices that you can make in order to stay healthy which may, in turn, reduce your risk of getting breast cancer. These healthy lifestyle choices include:

- **EATING A WELL-BALANCED DIET LOW IN FAT, AND RICH IN FRUITS, VEGETABLES, AND GRAINS**

Maintaining a healthy, balanced diet is a great way to stay healthy overall! You will increase your intake of valuable nutrients which may have powerful antioxidant properties, and vitamins and minerals which your body needs in order to function properly.

**TIP:** Tell your parents to pack plenty of fresh fruits and veggies in your lunch instead of fatty and sugary snacks like potato chips and cookies.

For breakfast try munching on a bowl of whole-grain cereal (not the sugar-filled cereals) topped with fruit and skim milk, instead of doughnuts or bagels. Dried fruit, nuts, and vegetables with dip are all great choices for after-school snacks. Start learning how to read the labels on food packages and learn what they mean. Watch out for foods high in saturated fat and sugar.

- **EXERCISE REGULARLY**

Exercising regularly keeps your body in prime condition and makes you feel a whole lot better also! By exercising, you can maintain strong bones and a healthy heart. There are numerous benefits to exercise, so get moving!

**TIP:** Try walking to nearby places instead of driving. Take part in athletic activities and sports in school. You will not only get a

good workout, but you will gain friends too, since sports are as much a social activity as they are vigorous!

- **LIMIT THE AMOUNTS OF ALCOHOL YOU CONSUME, IF ANY**

You are not legally allowed to drink until the age of twenty-one, so you should not be consuming any alcohol at your age! So, as a tip for when you get older, limit your alcohol intake to no more than one drink per day, if at all.

***MOST IMPORTANTLY, BE AWARE OF YOUR BODY BY PRACTICING THE THREE-STEP PLAN FOR EARLY DETECTION: BSE, CBE, AND MAMMOGRAPHY!***