

Breast Cancer



Awareness

FAQ's of Breast Cancer

Teens & Breast Cancer

What is Breast Cancer?

As part of our normal cell cycles, the cells in our body grow, divide and die everyday. Most of the time, they grow and divide in an orderly manner, producing cells when our bodies need them. In this way, we remain healthy. Sometimes, however, they grow and divide out of control. Breast cancer is when the cells of the breast grow and divide without any order or control. This uncontrolled growth forms a mass of extra tissue called a tumor.

What is a tumor?

A mass or lump of extra tissue. Tumors are classified as either benign or malignant. Benign tumors are not cancerous. They do not spread to other parts of the body nor do they invade other tissues. Malignant tumors are cancerous. They are made up of abnormal cells. They can spread to other parts of the body and invade neighboring tissues.

Are all tumors cancerous? If I find a lump, does that mean that I have cancer?

No, not all tumors are cancerous. In fact, 80% of lumps found are benign. However, you should never diagnose yourself. If you find any abnormalities or changes in breast tissue, consult your doctor at once!

Is breast cancer common in teens?

Breast cancer is not very common in teens, but is possible. It is important to be aware of your bodies now, while you are young,

so that you get into the habit of practicing good breast health for life.

At what age is breast cancer the greatest risk?

All women are at risk for breast cancer. Although breast cancer is most often seen in women over the age of 50, younger women, including teens, have been diagnosed with breast cancer. That is why it is so important to learn about breast self-examination and the importance of practicing good breast health, now. You will be more aware and better able to detect any changes or abnormalities that may occur during your lifetime. Remember, early detection is your best protection!

Does breast size matter when it comes to breast cancer?

No! People of all sizes and shapes can develop breast cancer.

If I injure my breasts, will I be at a greater risk of developing breast cancer?

Bumping, bruising or touching the breasts has no effect on breast cancer development.

What are some of the risk factors for breast cancer?

Risk factors that you cannot control include being a woman, getting older, a close family history of the disease, gene mutations, menstruation before the age of 12, and menopause after the age of 55. There are, however, risk factors that you CAN control. These include: diets high in saturated fat, lack of

exercise, obesity, excessive alcohol consumption, and smoking.

If I have a family history of the disease, am I at a higher risk of developing it?

One of the risk factors for breast cancer is a family history of the disease. You can talk to your doctor about your risks and possible options for early detection. Statistically, however, genetic mutations only account for 5-10% of breast cancer cases. Most women have no family history of the disease at all.

Does stress cause breast cancer?

There is no known evidence that stress causes breast cancer.

Is there a cure for breast cancer?

There is no known cure for breast cancer. There are, however, many treatments available to help control the disease. Surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, and hormone therapy are widely used methods of treating breast cancer.

Can you prevent breast cancer?

Since we do not know what causes breast cancer, it is difficult to know exactly how to prevent it. However, we do know that there are lifestyle choices that you can make in order to stay healthy overall. These choices include eating a well-balanced, low-fat diet rich in fruits and vegetables, exercising regularly, not smoking, and limiting the amounts of alcohol you consume.

BREAST CANCER

RESOURCES

RESOURCE MATERIALS

American Cancer Society

National Cancer Institute

Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation

Minnesota Affiliate of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation

BREAST CANCER RESOURCE SITES

The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation

Fights to eradicate breast cancer by advancing research, education, screening, and treatment.

1-800-I'M AWARE

www.breastcancerinfo.com

American Cancer Society

Has research, education, and patient service programs to help cancer patients and their families cope with cancer.

1-800-ACS-2345

www.cancer.org

The National Cancer Institute

Has an information service.

1-800-4 CANCER

www.nci.nih.gov

www.cancernet.nci.nih.gov

National Alliance of Breast Cancer Organizations (NABCO)

Lists national breast cancer support groups.

1-888-80 NABCO

www.nabco.org

National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship

1-888-650-9127

www.cansearch.org

Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization

Includes trained volunteers, all of whom are breast cancer survivors.

1-800-221-2141 or 800-986-9505 (Spanish)

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Physical activity

The first part of healthy living involves the energy that you release from your body. Physical activity not only burns energy (calories), but can also help reduce the risk of some types of cancer. Here is all it takes to get started:

- ◆ If you have been sedentary for a long time, are overweight, have a high risk of heart disease or some other chronic health problem, see your doctor for an evaluation before beginning an exercise program.
- ◆ Build physical activity into your daily routine. All you need is moderate (where you break a sweat) activity — like brisk walking for 30 minutes a day.
- ◆ Do whatever physical activity you enjoy most and gets you moving.
- ◆ After exercising, think about how good you feel about yourself and about your body. Use that feeling to motivate you the next time out.

If you are already physically active, keep up the good work. Physical activity may help lower your risk from breast cancer. This is because exercise reduces estrogen levels, fights obesity, lowers insulin levels and boosts the function of immune system cells that attack tumors. Gaining weight after menopause increases a woman's risk for breast cancer — exercise helps fight weight gain. A healthy diet and regular physical activity may reduce your risk for breast cancer.



Leading a healthy lifestyle will not eliminate your risk of serious health problems like cancer, but it can help reduce your risk.

Nutrition

The second part of healthy living involves what you put into your body. To reduce cancer risk you should:

- ◆ Eat more fruits and vegetables. Strive to eat at least five servings per day.
- ◆ Eat more whole-grains and cereals. Whenever possible, choose whole-grain breads and cereals.
- ◆ Eat fewer high fat foods and concentrated sweets. Red meat, many dairy products and fried foods are leading sources of fat — avoid them, as well as processed sweets (cakes, doughnuts, cookies, etc.), when you can.

Get plenty of calcium. Your body needs at least 1000 mg each day — you can get it from low-fat milk or yogurt, fortified fruit juices, spinach, kale or calcium tablets.



Alcohol — or the lack of it ~

The third part of healthy living involves reducing the use of alcohol. You may have heard about research studies which showed that drinking one serving of alcohol (for example, a glass of wine) each day improves your health by reducing your risk of heart attack. That is true, but the key is moderation.

Numerous studies have also shown that high levels of alcohol intake probably increase the risk of breast cancer. In general, the more alcohol you consume, the higher your risk of developing the disease. If you drink alcohol, drink in moderation — less than one drink a day.

Emotional health ~

Keeping your body free from disease is a big part of healthy living, but it is also important to keep a healthy attitude. Here are some ways to help maintain your *emotional* health.

- ◆ Do things that make you happy and that bring balance to your life. Pay attention to yourself and your needs. Go to the library and pick out a novel. Take a walk in the park. Have coffee with a friend.
- ◆ Have faith in yourself. Many things can help you be healthier and feel better about yourself. Learning to get in touch with the spiritual part of you through meditation or prayer can help you gain inner peace — in spite of what is going on in your life.



Healthy living is not just about keeping your body free of disease.

Let there be no smoke ~

If you do not smoke cigarettes, do not start. You have done your body a world of good by avoiding tobacco. If you do smoke, please ask your doctor for help in quitting. Smoking has been associated with much higher risks of many types of cancer. There are health benefits from quitting at any age. And after five years of being smoke-free, the risk of developing diseases as a result of having smoked goes down considerably.

Breast health care ~

Last but certainly not least, for a healthy life, remember your breast health care, too.

- ◆ Perform breast self-exams each month. (For step-by-step breast self-exam instructions, visit www.komen.org/bse.)
- ◆ Have mammograms and clinical breast exams done by a health care provider as recommended.
- ◆ Keep up with all your other regular appointments with your health care provider.

Related fact sheets in this series:

- ◆ breast cancer risk factors
- ◆ mammography

The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation is not a health care provider and does not give medical advice. The information provided in this material is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or to replace the services of a medical professional.

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