

Vocabulary

Angiogenesis: The process of forming new blood vessels.

Antibodies: proteins made by the body's immune system that attack and destroy foreign substances such as bacteria and viruses.

Axilla: The underarm or armpit.

Axillary: Pertaining to the area under the arm, including the lymph nodes.

Benign: Not cancerous; does not invade nearby tissue or spread to other parts of the body.

Breast Self-Exam: Method of early detection in which women and men inspect their breasts for changes and/or abnormalities.

Cancer: A term for diseases in which abnormal cells divide and grow without control or order. Cancer cells can invade and destroy healthy tissues, and they can spread through the bloodstream and lymphatic system to other parts of the body.

Chest wall: A large group of muscles that fan out beneath the breast and over the ribs.

Clinical Breast Exam: CBE. A physical examination of the breast, underarm and collarbone area performed by a doctor or nurse.

Cyclic breast changes: Normal tissue changes that occur due to the changing levels of female hormones during the menstrual cycle. Cyclic breast changes may cause swelling, tenderness and pain.

Cyst: Fluid-filled sac.

Duct: A tube through which body fluids pass. In the breast, milk flows through the ducts to the nipple.

Estrogen: A female hormone.

Fat tissue: Forms a covering for the breast and its amount varies according to weight and age. After menopause, fat tissue replaces the mammary glands and the breasts lose their firmness.

Fibroadenoma: Benign tumor that grows in response to an excess formation of mammary glands and surrounding breast tissue.

Fibrocystic disease: Benign breast irregularities and lumpiness.

Fibrous tissue: This tissue extends from under the surface of the skin of the breast to the chest wall to provide support for the breast.

Gene: The functional and physical unit of heredity passed from parent to child. Genes are made up of DNA.

Hormones: Chemicals produced by glands in the body and circulated in the bloodstream. Hormones control the actions of certain cells or organs.

Invasion: Process by which tumors invade nearby tissues.

Lymph: Fluid that travels through the lymphatic system and carries cells that help fight infection and disease.

Lymphatic System: The tissues and organs that produce, store and carry white blood cells that fight infection and diseases.

Lymph nodes: Filtering devices that drain the body's tissue fluids. They carry fluids, nutrients and waste material between the tissue and the bloodstream. They filter out the fluids collecting bacteria, viruses and other foreign substances that may be harmful to the body. Important in Breast Cancer because the lymph nodes are one of the first areas where breast cancer can spread.

Malignant: Cancerous; the tumor can invade and destroy nearby tissues and spread to other parts of the body.

Mammary glands: part of the breast that produces milk which is transported through the ducts to the nipple.

Mammogram: An x-ray of the breast.

Mammography: The use of x-rays to create a picture of the breast.

Menopause: The time of life when a woman's menstrual cycle stops.

Menstruation: Menstrual cycle. Monthly discharge of blood and tissues from the uterus during a woman's reproductive years.

Metastasis: When malignant cells travel from one part of the body to another.

Mutation: A change in the number, sequence or arrangement of a gene.

Nipple discharge: Fluid coming from the nipple.

Oncogenes: Genes that turn on cell division and growth. When oncogenes are damaged or mutated, cells do not stop growing when they should and cell growth continues out of control.

Oncologist: A doctor who specializes in treating cancer. Oncologists may specialize in particular types of cancer treatment; for example, a radiation oncologist specializes in radiation treatment.

Ovaries: The pair of female reproductive glands in which the ova, or eggs, are formed. The ovaries are located in the pelvis, one on each side of the uterus.

Pathologist: A doctor who identifies disease by studying cells and tissues under a microscope.

Progesterone: A female hormone.

Risk factor: A habit, trait, or condition that increases the chance of developing disease.

Screening: Checking for disease when there are no symptoms.

Suppressor genes: Genes that turn off cell division and growth. When suppressor genes are damaged or mutated, the genes stop working and cell growth continues out of control.

Tissue: A group or layer of cells that together perform specific functions.

Tumor: An abnormal growth of extra tissue forming a mass or lump. Tumors can either be benign or malignant.

X-ray: A high-energy form of radiation used to form an image of body structures. A breast x-ray is a mammogram.