



> Breast cancer awareness

October

What is breast cancer?

The most commonly diagnosed cancer in women, breast cancer is the uncontrolled growth of cells in breast tissue. Usually forming a tumor, these cells can be seen by an x-ray or felt as a lump. Some tumors are malignant (cancerous) which means they can move into surrounding tissue or spread to other parts of the body, but with early detection and treatment, most people with breast cancer continue a normal and healthy life.

While monthly breast self-exams and regular mammograms play an important part in early detection, it's important to know that the majority of breast lumps are benign (non-cancerous) and are not life threatening.

One in eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime, but thanks to screening and early detection, increased awareness and continually improving treatment options, more people continue to successfully battle the disease every year.

Sources: American Cancer Society, National Breast Cancer Foundation, BreastCancer.org

Trivia time:

Can I reduce my risk of breast cancer?

Answer: Yes! Limiting alcohol, not smoking, controlling your weight and being physical active are all great ways to reducing your risk.

Source: Mayo Clinic

How can I help?

Sometimes it's hard to know how to help a friend or loved one with breast cancer. Keeping the lines of communication open is a great way to offer them the chance to share their experience with you, be it feelings of anger, frustration or sadness. Being present is another positive way to show your support, letting them know you're there to talk – and listen. Be honest about your feelings, too, allowing you both to work through a difficult time together.

If it's a friend that's ill, keep in touch often and at times that work best for their schedule. If you visit, make sure to keep it short and be mindful of physical and mental limitations. Don't be afraid to touch or hug your friend. Give honest compliments, offer to run errands or cook a meal for your friend's family. Above all, be compassionate – your strong emotional support will help in more ways than you know.

Sources: American Cancer Society



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The risk factors for breast cancer

Like lots of illnesses, there are several risk factors for breast cancer. You are unable to change some – like being a woman, your age and having a certain genetic history. But luckily, there are several lifestyle-related factors that you can control. For instance, alcohol consumption. Women who limit themselves to one drink a day or less have a very small increase in risk over women who don't drink at all. Another great way to reduce your risk of breast cancer is keeping your weight at an optimal level through physical activity. Exercising just one to two hours per week will reduce your risk of breast cancer, as well as many other illnesses. As always, it's important not to smoke, or reduce the amount you do smoke.

In addition to maintaining a healthy lifestyle, make sure to perform monthly breast self-exams and have regular mammograms to stay healthy and reduce your risk of breast cancer.

Sources: American Cancer Society

Trivia time:

What's the leading risk for breast cancer?

Answer: Simply getting older. Almost 80% of new cases are diagnosed in women over the age of 50.

Sources: City of Hope

Sunscreen safety

Who needs to wear sunscreen? Everyone. When do you need to wear it? All year long. Protecting you from the sun's harmful rays, sunscreen can help prevent skin cancer. It's also helpful to seek shade when appropriate, wear protective clothing and use extra caution near snow or water, which can increase your risk of sunburn. Choose a sunscreen that offers broad-spectrum protection (protects against UVA and UVB rays), has an SPF of 30 or higher and is water resistant to stay safe and have fun in the sun.

Source: American Academy of Dermatology

Can men get breast cancer?

Although it is rare, some men do get breast cancer. Usually diagnosed between the ages of 60-70, men with breast cancer only make up about one percent of all cases. The risk factors for men and breast cancer include age, hormone levels and family history. Because men are typically not screened for the disease, it's often diagnosed at a later stage, but as new and existing treatments develop and improve and awareness increases, more men are winning the fight against breast cancer than ever.

Sources: Mayo Clinic, National Cancer Institute, BreastCancer.org