

Healthy Living

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 Jane Buckler, B.A., N.D. ~ Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine

Breast cancer death rates have dropped, but stats are still staggering

Each year more than 19,000 Canadian women are diagnosed with breast cancer and of those approximately 5,500 will die of the disease.

According to the Canadian Cancer Society breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer in Canadian women and accounts for more than one in three cancer diagnoses.

The good news is that breast cancer death rates have declined 25 per cent among women aged 50 to 69 and almost 14 per cent overall since 1985.

Since October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month the Canadian Cancer Society has provided some information about the disease and the importance of early detection.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Simply being a woman is the major risk factor for breast cancer. According to statistics 75 to 80 per cent of breast cancers occur in women with no other risk factors.

Increasing age is another factor. As women age their risk for breast cancer increases. Most breast cancers occur in women over 50.

Previous breast cancer is another risk factor. If a woman has already had breast cancer there is a greater chance she will develop it again.

Family history is also a risk factor. If a woman's immediate family members (such as a mother or sister) have had breast cancer before they reached menopause,



she may be at increased risk. The Cancer Society offers suggestions so women can make sure that if they develop breast cancer, it's found and treated early. Women over 50 should partici-

pate in a breast cancer early detection program that includes an annual clinical breast exam by a doctor or other health professional. They should also learn how to do breast self-examination and do it at the same time every month. Women over 50 should also have a mammogram every two years.

Women, aged 40 to 49, should participate in a breast cancer early detection program that includes having an annual breast exam and breast self examinations done at the same time each month.

Younger women, aged 20 to 39, should become familiar with how their breasts look and feel and be able to recognize breast changes.

They should also have an annual physical exam by their doctor and be aware of the risk factors for breast cancer and early detection methods for all groups.

The Cancer Society stresses since the cause of breast cancer is unknown and little is known about how to prevent it, early detection is the best defence.

The Cancer Society offers a number of services including one-on-one emotional support in person or by phone. For information about those and other services call Cathy Gerrow of the Acton branch of the Canadian Cancer Society, 519-853-1424 or the Brampton Cancer Society office which services Georgetown at 905-451-4460 or 1-866-711-0111.



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