

national breast cancer awareness month

Breast Cancer — Early Detection is the Best Prevention

Breast cancer has been a widespread disease for years. Its cause is unknown, and it knows no race or age boundaries for attacking mostly women.

SUPPORT FOR WOMEN LIVING WITH BREAST CANCER

TORONTO - The Canadian Cancer Society helps women living with breast cancer by offering reliable information and community support services.

"No woman need face breast cancer alone", says Sylvia Leonard, Senior Director, Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario Division. "The Canadian Cancer Society is here to help. We offer support and information for people living with cancer, their caregivers, family and friends."

The Canadian Cancer Society offers reliable information about breast cancer, diagnosis and treatment as well as ways to reduce one's risk of cancer and what people need to know about early detection and screening. You can get the information you need by calling 1-888-939-3333, visiting www.cancer.ca or by contacting one of our community offices across Ontario.

The Canadian Cancer Society's community services include peer support by phone or face to face, rides to and from cancer-related care, and practical support for people at cancer treatment centres, lodges and hospitals.

"If you or someone you care about has been diagnosed with cancer, you probably have many questions and

concerns," says Leonard. "We're committed to responding to your needs, whether you're living with cancer yourself or your life has been touched in some other way by this illness."

WHAT IS BREAST CANCER?

Breast cancer is an uncontrolled growth of breast cells that may form a mass of extra tissue called a tumor. Tumors can be benign (non-cancerous) or malignant (cancerous). The most common type of breast cancer begins in the lining of the ducts — the tube-like part of the breast that milk passes through to reach the nipple — called ductal carcinoma. When it spreads outside the ducts, it is called invasive breast cancer (most breast cancers are invasive). Metastatic breast cancer is cancer that has spread from the site of the initial cancer to other parts of the body.

While breast cancer is more common in women over 50, women of all ages can take quick action to protect their breast health. To find out more about screening guidelines for other age groups and breast cancer risk factors, visit www.cancer.ca or call 1-888-939-3333.

SIGNS OF BREAST CANCER

The scariest part about breast cancer is that you can have it and not even know it. Early breast cancer usually does not cause pain and there may even be no symptoms at all. However, as the cancer grows, it can cause any of the following changes: a lump or thickening in or near the breast or in the



Educating yourself about breast cancer and creating an early detection plan, which includes giving yourself a proper breast self-exam, can help save your life.

underarm area; a change in the size or shape of the breast; nipple discharge or tenderness; inverted nipples; ridges or pitting of the breast (skin looks similar to an orange peel); and the way the skin of the breast, areola (area surrounding the nipple) or nipple looks or feels (red, scaly, warm or swollen).

EARLY DETECTION

Studies show that regular breast self-exams, combined with an annual exam by a doctor, improve the chances of detecting cancer early, which is the key to more treatment options and a greater chance of survival.

One way women can take an active part in the early detection of breast cancer, according to thebreastcancer-site.com, is by following an early detection plan which means having:

- breast examinations by your doctor every two years from ages 20 to 39 and every year thereafter
- regular breast self-examinations report any changes in your breasts
- a mammogram every year for women over age 50

Keeping a record of your self-exams and mammograms and marking your calendar with reminders will help you follow your early detection plan.

PROPER BREAST SELF EXAM

Get in the habit of doing a breast self-examination once a month to familiarize yourself with how your breasts normally look and feel. Examine yourself several days after your period ends, when your breasts are least likely to be swollen and tender. If you are no longer having periods, choose a day that's easy to remember, such as the first or last day of the month.

Step 1 In the shower with fingers flat, move gently over every part of each breast. Use your right hand to

examine your left breast, and left hand for right breast. Check for a lump, hard knot or thickening. Carefully observe any changes in your breasts.

Step 2 In front of a mirror, put your arms at your sides and inspect your breasts. Raise your arms high overhead and look for any changes in the contour of each breast, a swelling, a dimpling of skin or changes in the nipple. Then rest your palms on your hips and press firmly to flex your chest muscles. Note that few women's left and right breasts match exactly.

Step 3 Lying down, place a pillow under your right shoulder, with right arm behind your head. With fingers of the left hand flat, press right breast gently in small circular motions, moving vertically or in a circular pattern, covering the entire breast. Use light, medium and firm pressure. Squeeze nipple and check for discharge and lumps. Repeat these steps for your left breast.

Don't panic if you think you feel a lump. Most women have some lumps or lumpy areas in their breasts all the time, and eight out of 10 breast lumps that are removed are benign. However, if you notice any changes that last over a full month's cycle or seem to get worse or more obvious over time, it's best to bring them to the attention of your doctor.

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