



Breast Cancer

A W A R E N E S S

Get screened.
Get informed.
Get in the fight.

Early Detection is Key

GET PEACE OF MIND FROM SELF CHECKS, MAMMOGRAMS

Like many medical conditions, breast cancer can be best treated when caught early.

By catching the cancer in its early stages, while it's still small and may not even be showing any symptoms yet, you'll be much more likely to have a good medical outcome. That's why doctors recommend regular self-examinations and mammograms for women at risk of developing breast cancer.

MAMMOGRAMS

Having a regular mammogram is one of the best ways to catch breast cancer in women. The American Cancer Society (ACS) recommends women age 40 and older get a mammogram every year.

While mammograms have their limitations — they can miss some cancers and sometimes register a “false positive,” predicting cancer where none actually exists — they offer a good, cost-effective way to find early-stage cancer in many women.

MRIS

In addition to mammograms, some women at increased risk for breast cancer should have MRI scans

performed annually. The ACS doesn't recommend this for everyone, just those with a 20 percent or greater lifetime risk of developing breast cancer.

For people with moderate risk of breast cancer, meaning 15 to 20 percent over their lifetime, the ACS recommends talking to a health professional about the benefits and limitations of MRI imaging. The organization doesn't recommend MRIs for women with less than a 15% risk of breast cancer in their lives.

Talk to your doctor to find out what your risk factor is and whether MRI imaging would be a good idea in your situation.

BREAST EXAMS

Having your doctor do a clinical breast exam is another good way to catch cancer symptoms in their early stages.

Not only does it help the doctor find any signs of possible cancer that might need further testing, but it also gives the patient and doctor a chance to talk about any changes in the breast tissue.

The ACS recommends

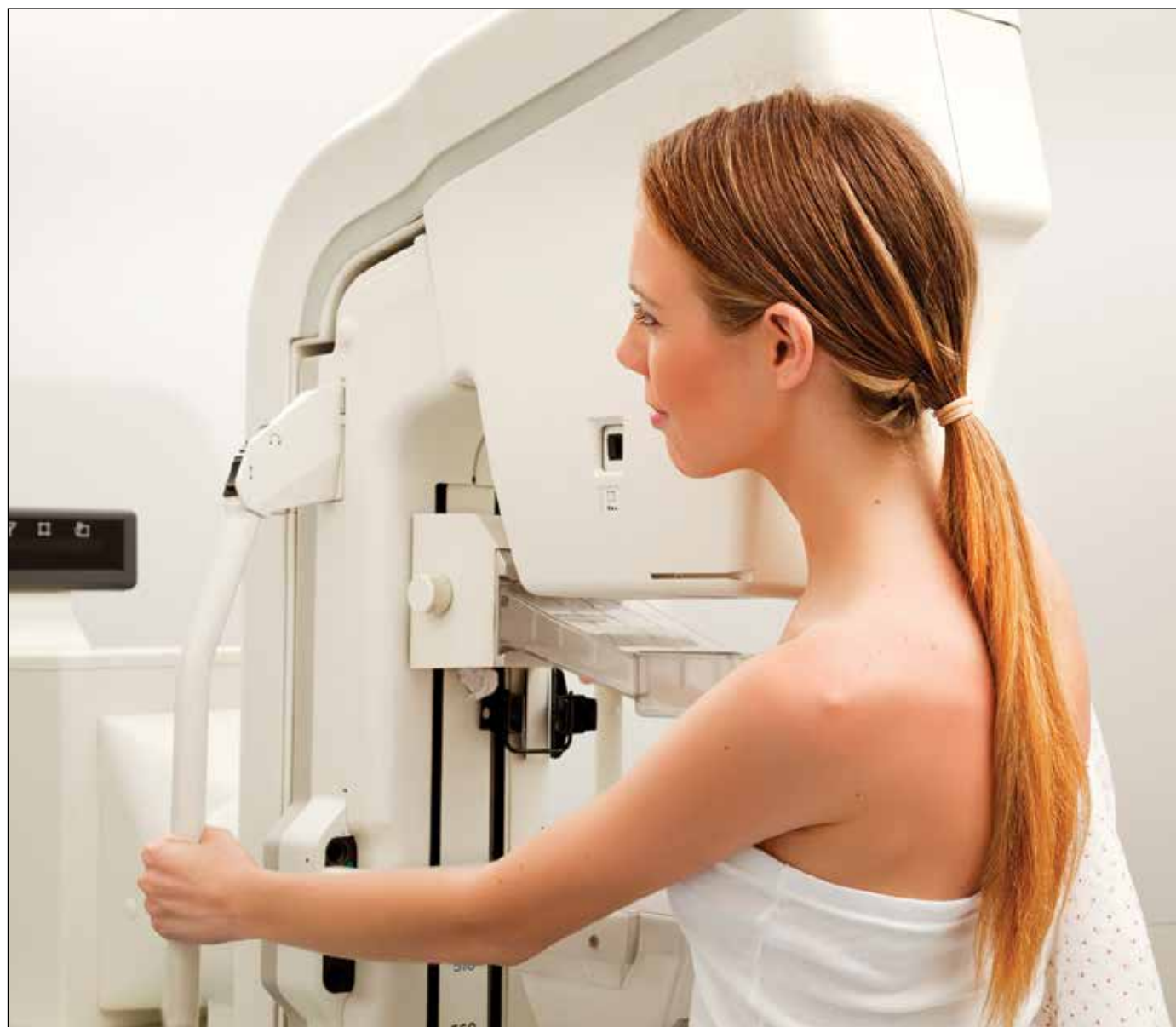


PHOTO: LEAF / YAYMICRO.COM

women in their 20s and 30s have a clinical breast exam once every three years as part of their regular checkups. Women age 40 and older should have a professional breast exam annually.

SELF-EXAMINATION

Starting in their 20s, the

ACS recommends women perform regular self-examinations of their breasts to look for any changes. If there are lumps or changes in the tissue, they should be reported immediately to your doctor.

Your health professional should be able to help you learn how to perform the exam yourself. Some women are comfortable

with a scheduled, systematic, step-by-step exam, while others prefer a more relaxed method, such as when showering or getting dressed.

The important thing is to be aware of any changes in your breast that might need medical attention. Your doctor can help you find a method that works best for you.

Myths About Breast Cancer

Today's data-based world makes it easy to share stories and information instantly, but there's also a big downside: not everything we hear or read is true.

Just like those e-mail scammers from Nigeria who promise you millions of dollars in exchange for your personal details, false claims about breast cancer run rampant on the Internet and elsewhere.

Here are a few of them, along with commentary from the American Cancer Society's website, cancer.org.

MYTH: Deodorants cause breast cancer

FACT: "A carefully designed epidemiologic study of this issue published in 2002 compared 813 women with breast cancer and 793 women without the disease. The researchers found no link between breast cancer risk and anti-perspirant use, deodorant use, or underarm shaving."

MYTH: Wearing a bra all day can cause toxins to accumulate, thus causing breast cancer.

FACT: "There are no scientifically valid studies that show wearing bras of any type causes breast cancer. ... We do not know of any epidemiologic studies published in scientific journals that suggest

bras directly contribute to breast cancer risk or that lymphatic compression by bras might cause breast cancer."

MYTH: Plastic water bottles can cause breast cancer. Never re-use plastic bottles, and don't drink from bottles left in the heat because the plastic will release cancer-causing DEHA.

FACT: "DEHA is not inherent in the plastic used to make these bottles, and even if it was the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) says DEHA 'cannot reasonably be anticipated to cause cancer, teratogenic effects, immunotoxicity, neurotoxicity, gene mutations, liver, kidney, reproductive, or developmental toxicity or other serious or irreversible chronic health effects.'"

MYTH: Shampoos containing sodium laureth sulfate (SLS) cause cancer. Don't use shampoos that contain SLS.

FACT: "Sodium lauryl sulfate (SLS) and its chemical cousin sodium laureth sulfate (SLES) are known irritants, not known carcinogens."



Is Hormone Therapy Safe?

SOME TREATMENTS ARE SHOWN TO INCREASE CANCER RISK



For decades, it has been common for women to receive hormone treatments after they go through menopause.

Known by several different names — post-menopausal hormone therapy (PHT), hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and menopausal hormone therapy (MHT) — hormones are often prescribed to help women relieve their menopause-related symptoms and to prevent osteoporosis, the weakening of bones.

But, according to the American Cancer Society (ACS), these treatments can sometimes cause an increased risk for breast cancer.

COMBINED

For women who have not had a hysterectomy, doctors often prescribe two hormones in combination. They will prescribe estrogen to help with the menopause symptoms, and they will also prescribe progesterone to decrease the risk of uterine cancer.

This combination, though, actually increases the risk of getting breast cancer, according to the ACS.

The organization recommends women talk with their doctor about the pros and cons of hormone therapy after menopause.

ESTROGEN ALONE

Estrogen prescribed on its own, not in combination with progesterone, does not seem to increase breast cancer risk, the ACS says. Some studies have even shown it reducing the risk of breast cancer in women who have had their uterus removed.

TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

The bottom line is that anyone considering hormone therapy should know the possible risks, benefits and side effects of such a treatment.

If you and your doctor decide that post-menopausal hormone therapy is the right answer, the ACS recommends using the lowest dosage that is effective and keeping the treatment time as short as possible.

Risk Factors at Play

A LOOK AT WHAT INCREASES THE CHANCE OF GETTING BREAST CANCER

Some of the factors that make you more or less likely to get breast cancer are out of your control.

For example, while men can get breast cancer, women are 100 times more likely to get it. Some people are genetically more likely to get breast cancer, and family history can also play a role — all things that a person has no control over.

Other factors, though, are affected by lifestyle choices. Here's a look at a few of the things that can influence a person's likelihood to develop breast cancer according to the American Cancer Society.

EXERCISE

Recent studies are showing a link between physical activity and breast cancer rates. People who work out more seem to have a lower chance of getting the disease.

How much exercise is required? A Women's Health Initiative study showed breast cancer risk could be reduced 18 percent by walking two and a half hours a week.

The American Cancer Society suggests being active 45 minutes to an hour at least five days a week to reduce the risk of breast cancer.

ALCOHOL

Studies show a correlation between drinking alcohol and getting breast cancer.

While women who have just one drink a day show a very slight increase in risk, people who have two to five drinks per day show a bigger increase in risk. They're roughly one and a half times more likely to be diagnosed with breast

cancer, studies suggest.

BREAST-FEEDING

As if there weren't enough research about the benefits of breast-feeding, here's a new one: it may decrease chances of getting breast cancer.

Researchers aren't sure why there is a connection, but it seems strongest in women who breastfeed continually for 18 months to two years, something rare in the United States.

CHILDREN

Multiple pregnancies and having children at a younger age can reduce breast cancer risk. Women without children or who undergo childbirth after age 30 have a slightly higher chance of getting breast cancer.

OBESITY

Women who are overweight, especially after menopause, are shown to have an increased risk for developing breast cancer.

When women are obese after menopause, their fat tissue releases a small amount of estrogen, which can be a risk factor for breast cancer. In addition, many overweight women will have more insulin in their blood, which has been linked to breast cancer, the studies show.



BY THE NUMBERS

FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT BREAST CANCER

Breast cancer is a wide-ranging disease by any measure. Here are a few of the eye-popping numbers from the American Cancer Society:

226,870: New cases of invasive breast cancer expected in the U.S. in 2012

39,510: Women expected to die of breast cancer in 2012

2,140: Breast cancer cases among men in 2011

2.6 million: Women with a history of breast cancer who were alive in 2008

95: Percent of breast cancer cases are diagnosed in women age 40 and older

50: Percent of breast cancer patients are diagnosed at age 61 or younger

89: Percent of women survive five years after their breast cancer diagnosis

82: Percent of women survive 10 years after their breast cancer diagnosis

77: Percent of women survive 15 years after their breast cancer diagnosis

Help Someone You Love

KNOW A PERSON WITH BREAST CANCER? BE SUPPORTIVE

When someone you love has breast cancer, the feelings can be overwhelming. Just knowing where to start can be difficult.

There are some things you can do to help, though. From dealing with the cancer fighter's emotional needs to their physical needs like transportation and food, you can make their burden a little lighter.

MEDICAL HELP

The process of getting breast cancer treatment can be exhausting and time-consuming. Look for anything you can do to help make the process easier for the cancer patient and their family.

One place to start is transportation. For a close friend or family member, you can go along to their doctor visits for moral support, and you can help coordinate rides to get them to and from the doctor.

And, because insurance companies aren't always easy to deal with, offer to help them fill out paperwork and keep all their medical information organized. The more you can help with the mundane things, the more your loved one can focus on their cancer fight and living a full life.



PHOTO: DIEGO_CERVO / YAYMICRO.COM

HOUSEHOLD HELP

Cancer also takes a serious toll on day-to-day life in most cases, which is why it's important to offer as much help as possible around the house.

Start with food. You can offer to do grocery shopping, cook meals or arrange for food to be delivered to their house. If your loved one

belongs to a church, that can be a great place to turn for help with meals.

You can also offer to help with the countless household chores that need to be done including laundry, taking care of pets, doing yard work and cleaning the house. If they have children, offer to help watch them or arrange for their care.

EMOTIONAL HELP

Since every person's cancer experience is different, the most important thing to remember is to be a good listener. Find out what their needs are by listening closely to what they're saying, and be ready to offer plenty of support and encouragement.

You should be honest about your feelings and

share them openly. You should also respect their wishes for how information on their health should be shared. If they want to keep it private, or only tell a few close people, it's important that you honor their desires.

Finally, one tip can't be overemphasized: be ready to give plenty of hugs.

More Survivors Than Ever

MILLIONS OF PEOPLE HAVE BEATEN CANCER, STUDY SHOWS

While a cancer diagnosis is never any easy thing to go through, people can take heart in one fact: there are more cancer survivors today than at any other time in history.

According to a recent study by the American Cancer Society and the National Cancer Institute, there are an estimated 13.7 million people who have survived cancer alive today in the United States.

The rate of new cancer cases is going down, the study says, but more people are surviving the disease because, at least in part, new treatments are helping cancer patients live longer.

Why is such a study important? Because it points out the huge population of people who have special needs as cancer survivors. Aside from the obvious medical care that is necessary, a cancer diagnosis also brings along social and psychological issues that need to be addressed in millions of people.

The study also uncovered some interesting facts about cancer survivors, including:

— Less than half of cancer survivors are elderly. The largest group (45 percent) are age 70 or older, but most survivors are younger than that.

— The median age for a can-

cer diagnosis is 66.

— There are nearly 60,000 estimated survivors of childhood cancer in the United States today.

— Breast cancer is, by far, the most common type of cancer found in women at 41 percent.

“Many survivors, even among those who are cancer free, must cope with the long-term effects of treatment, as well as psychological concerns such as fear of recurrence,” said Elizabeth Ward, the report’s senior author, according to a statement from the American Cancer Society. “As more people survive cancer, it is vital that health care providers are aware of the special needs of cancer patients and caregivers.”

