

## October National Health Observances

### What is Breast Cancer?

Breast cancer is considered a heterogeneous disease in which malignant (cancer) cells form in the tissues of the breast. Heterogeneous simply means it's a different disease in every different woman, man, or age group and has different cell populations within the tumor itself. Breast cancer is generally much more aggressive in younger women.

Breast cancer is the second leading cause of death from cancer in American women, lung cancer is first. American women also develop breast cancer more than any other type of cancer, except skin cancer.

*Fact: 11% of women in America will eventually develop breast cancer, and each year, about 44,000 American women will die from breast cancer. Regular screening can significantly reduce this risk.*

*(<http://www.pmcquam.com/resource/breastca.htm>)*

### Did you know that half of all women diagnosed with breast cancer are over the age of 65?

Although no one knows the exact cause of breast cancer, research has shown that women with certain "risk factors" are more likely to develop the disease than others. Older age is only one "risk factor", here are some other "risk factors" you may not know:

- Early onset of menses or late menopause
- Diets high in saturated fat
- Older age at birth of first child or never having given birth
- A personal history of breast cancer or benign (not cancerous) breast disease
- A family history (particularly a mother or sister)
- Treatment with radiation therapy to the breast or chest
- Breast tissue that is dense on a mammogram
- Taking hormones such as estrogen and progesterone
- Obesity
- Moderate alcoholic intake – more than 2 drinks per day
- Gene changes – including BRCA1, BRCA2, and others

Keep in mind that these are only "risk factors". That means you are at a higher risk if you have one or more of these factors, it doesn't mean you aren't at risk if you don't.

### Did you know that there are seven different types of breast cancer?

Infiltrating Ductal is the most common type of breast cancer and it represents 78% of all malignancies. The lesions can be either stellate (star like) or well circumscribed (rounded) in appearance on mammography. Usually the stellate lesions have a poorer prognosis. Inflammatory Breast Cancer (IBC) is a very rare, but extremely aggressive type of breast cancer. The lymph vessels in the skin of the breast become blocked with cancer cells and can cause the breast to look swollen and red, or "inflamed". IBC represents 1 to 5 percent of all breast cancers reported in the United States.

### Did you know that men are also at risk?

An estimated 1700 men will be diagnosed this year alone and 450 will die. Although that may be a small percentage, men should give themselves monthly exams and notify their physicians of any changes immediately.

**Did you know that not all lumps found are breast cancer?**

Anytime you find persistent lump in your breast or you notice changes in your breast tissue you should see a physician immediately, even though eight out of ten lumps are benign (not cancerous). Don't let fear keep you from finding out the truth. Perform monthly breast exams, schedule regular doctor visits, and schedule regular mammograms. Take charge of your own health!

**Have you done your breast self-exam (BSE) this month?**

For more information go to: <http://www.pmcguam.com/resource/brstexam.htm>

**Resources:**

<http://www.nationalbreastcancer.org/about-breast-cancer/>

<http://www.cancer.gov/>

