



# BalanceWorks® Newsletter

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## Breast Cancer Awareness

In honor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, we are pleased to bring you our annual newsletter, which contains vital information to help educate you and your loved ones on issues such as updated guidelines for early detection, symptoms, risk factors, and healthy habits to help ward off breast cancer.

We re-publish this breast cancer awareness newsletter each October as breast cancer affects so many people. In fact, The American Cancer Society estimates that about 1 in 8 women will develop invasive breast cancer during their lifetime, which is why breast cancer awareness is so important.

### Early Detection:

Women of all ages are advised to administer self breast exams on a monthly basis. Starting this at a young age familiarizes you with your own normal breast tissue; this will make you more capable of noticing an irregularity such as a lump if it should ever occur.

The risk of breast cancer increases with age, which is why the American Cancer Society sets the following guidelines for early detection. Women ages 40 to 44 should have the choice to start annual breast cancer screening with mammograms if they wish to do so. Women age 45 to 54 should get mammograms every year. Women 55

and older may switch to mammograms every 2 years, or can continue yearly screenings.

If you have an immediate relative who was diagnosed with breast cancer you should talk to your doctor about when you should start receiving mammograms, as they may want you to begin earlier.

When breast cancer first strikes it may not have any signs or symptoms, which would make it impossible to pick up on a self exam. However, mammograms can pick up on breast cancer in its earliest stage; this makes them a doctor's best chance to diagnose breast cancer early.

### Symptoms:

As we mentioned, breast cancer may not have any warning signs, however, there are a few symptoms some women experience when they have breast cancer. The symptoms below do not necessarily indicate breast cancer, but they can be a warning sign and should probably be checked out by a doctor just in case:

- A new lump or bump in the breast or underarm
- Swelling, warmth, redness, or darkening of the breast
- Any discharge from the nipple
- Irritation, puckering, or dimpling of the breast skin
- Change in breast size or shape

For more information or support on breast cancer awareness, contact the work/life experts at BalanceWorks® by calling:

**1.800.327.2255**

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- Inversion or pulling of the nipple
- Flaky skin or (abnormal) redness in the nipple and/or breast
- Pain in any area of the breast

## Risk Factors:

Breast cancer occurs when breast cells begin growing abnormally and then these cells form a tumor. However, doctors have not discovered exactly what causes the cells to mutate in some people and not in others. Therefore, it is possible for anyone to develop breast cancer, but there are some factors that can increase your risk.

**Growing Older** – Your risk increases as you age, the majority of all new breast cancer cases occur in women 50 years of age and older.

**Being Female** – Breast cancer is far more prevalent in women, less than 1% of all breast cancer cases develop in men.

**Personal Breast Cancer History** – If you have already had cancer in 1 breast, you have an increased risk of developing it in the other breast.

**Family History** – 5% - 10% of breast cancer cases are linked to a genetic mutation that is passed down amongst family members, which raises ones risk.

**Hormonal Changes** – If you begin your period before age 12, have your first baby after age 30 or never have a full term pregnancy, or begin menopause after age 55, there is a slight increased risk as this means you are exposed to hormones longer.

**Obesity** – Being severely overweight increases your breast cancer risk.

**Alcohol** – Excessive drinking may increase your risk.

**Hormone Therapy** – Women who take hormone medications that contain estrogen and

progesterone to help regulate symptoms of menopause have an increased risk.

## Healthy Habits:

There are some risk factors that we can't control such as being female, growing older, or having a family history of breast cancer; however there are positive steps that we can take in our daily lives to help reduce the risk. Maintaining a healthy weight is an important factor in reducing your risk of developing breast cancer. Staying fit can be done through diet and exercise, both of which offer additional cancer fighting benefits. Exercising for at least 30 minutes a day for 5 days a week may cut down cancer risk. Foods that are high in antioxidants and anti-inflammatory properties such as tomatoes, broccoli, and cauliflower are thought to have powerful cancer fighting abilities. Fatty fish such as salmon has also been shown to help ward off breast cancer because they are high in omega-3 fatty acids, which have strong anti-inflammatory properties. As for our cancer prevention beverage of choice, reach for some green tea. Green tea contains EGCG, which is an extremely powerful antioxidant.

Limit your alcohol consumption, as an excess of one drink per day can increase your risk. Finally, if you are experiencing menopause, try to limit your use of hormone therapy. If your post-menopausal symptoms are unbearable use the lowest dose of hormone therapy possible for the shortest amount of time.

Remember, early detection is a person's best chance of surviving a breast cancer diagnosis, so be sure to schedule a mammogram if you are over 45 and have not had one within two years!

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