



BalanceWorks® Newsletter

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Breast Cancer Awareness

Breast cancer affects so many people. In fact, besides skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer in American woman. 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.

The good news is that when diagnosed in its earliest stages, breast cancer has a very high survival rate. In addition, there have been several recent developments in detection and prevention. For example, just last year we learned that in addition to mammograms, researchers are developing a new tool that can see inside breast tissue and distinguish a cancerous tumor from a harmless lump. This noninvasive imaging tool could help some women avoid unnecessary breast biopsies. Researchers also recently solved the mystery of how breast cancer spreads to the bone, which has led to an experimental drug to treat cancer that has metastasized in this way.

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

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 general guidelines advise women to begin getting mammograms on an annual basis once they turn 40. There has been some debate recently regarding women under 40 with no family history receiving mammograms; however the guidelines remain the same. 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 (X-rays of the breast) 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:

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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- 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
- 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, 95% of all new breast cancer cases occur in women 40 years of age and older

Being Female – Breast cancer is far more prevalent in women, men only account for 1% of all breast cancer cases

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 one risk

Hormonal Changes – If you begin your period before age 12, have your first baby after age 35, or begin menopause after age 55, there is an increased risk

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 has been shown to 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 yourself a mammogram if you are over 40 and have not had one within two years!

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