

# October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month

## Tips to Help Keep Your Health On Track!

### What is breast cancer?

Cells in our body normally divide, grow and die everyday, usually in an organized manner. It's when cells grow out of control that a tumor is formed and tumors are either benign or malignant. While a benign tumor is not cancerous, a malignant one is because the cells that make-up the malignant tumor are abnormal. A malignant tumor that forms in the breast is called breast cancer. Malignant tumors are especially a concern because they can attack nearby tissue and spread to other parts of the body. The most frequent areas in the body that breast cancer can spread to are the lungs, liver, bones, and brain. <sup>(1)</sup>

### What causes breast cancer and what are the risks?

There are combinations of factors, both unknown and known, that scientists believe may cause or contribute to breast cancer. Unfortunately, the main risk factor is being female. While men can develop breast cancer, it is 100 times more likely that women will develop such cancers. Some of the other factors contributing to the risk of breast cancer are: <sup>(1)</sup>

- Genetics and a family history of breast cancer
- Lifestyle choices like diet & alcohol use
- Reproductive factors like menopause
- Age, as the risk is higher for older women
- Women who have dense breasts
- Personal history of Hodgkin's or other cancers

### What are the warning signs of breast cancer?

As a result of the increased use of mammography over the years, most women are finding out they have breast cancer before any warnings or symptoms appear. However, it is important not to rely only on a mammography for detection as not all breast cancers are discovered this way. Learning to pay close attention to the following warning signs may be life-saving. Should you experience any of these, contact your doctor immediately: <sup>(1)</sup>

- Lump or hard knot inside breast or underarm
- Swelling, warmth, redness of the breast
- Change in size or shape of the breast
- New pain in the breast that doesn't go away
- Dimpling/puckering of skin of the breast
- Itchy, scaly or sore nipple
- Nipple discharge that starts suddenly
- Pulling in of nipple or any part of breast

### What are some breast cancer awareness tips?

After skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer in women. The good news is that it can be successfully treated simply by understanding the risks, the warning signs and the screening tests available. Self-awareness can be the beginning step to understanding your risk for breast cancer. Some self-awareness tips are: <sup>(1)</sup>

- Know your risk
- Get screened
- Perform self-exams
- Make healthy lifestyle choices
- Talk to your doctor
- Know your breast structure and what is normal for you

### What are the common screening methods?

There are a few different methods for screening for breast cancer. Women who have regular recommended screenings increase their chances of surviving breast cancer as screening tests may find the cancer early while it is still treatable. The common screening methods for breast cancer are: <sup>(1)</sup>

- Mammography
- MRI
- Clinical breast exam

### When to contact your doctor?

Contact your doctor immediately if you have any of the symptoms listed above. To learn more about breast cancer or to find additional information on the recommended screening guidelines go to [www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org) or call them at their toll-free number (877) 465-6636. If you are in a high-risk group for breast cancer and you have any immediate concerns or questions, call your doctor to obtain medical advice. <sup>(1)</sup>

<sup>(1)</sup> [www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org)

This information is intended as informational only; not as a replacement for the medical advice of your physician.