

# *Breast Cancer Awareness Monthly Health Toolkit*



## *A little about Breast Cancer*

Breast cancer occurs when cells in breast tissue start to grow out of control and rob surrounding cells of nutrients causing them to die. When enough cancer cells are clumped together it is known as a tumor. Cancer spreads when pieces of the tumor break off and move to other parts of the body and form new tumors.

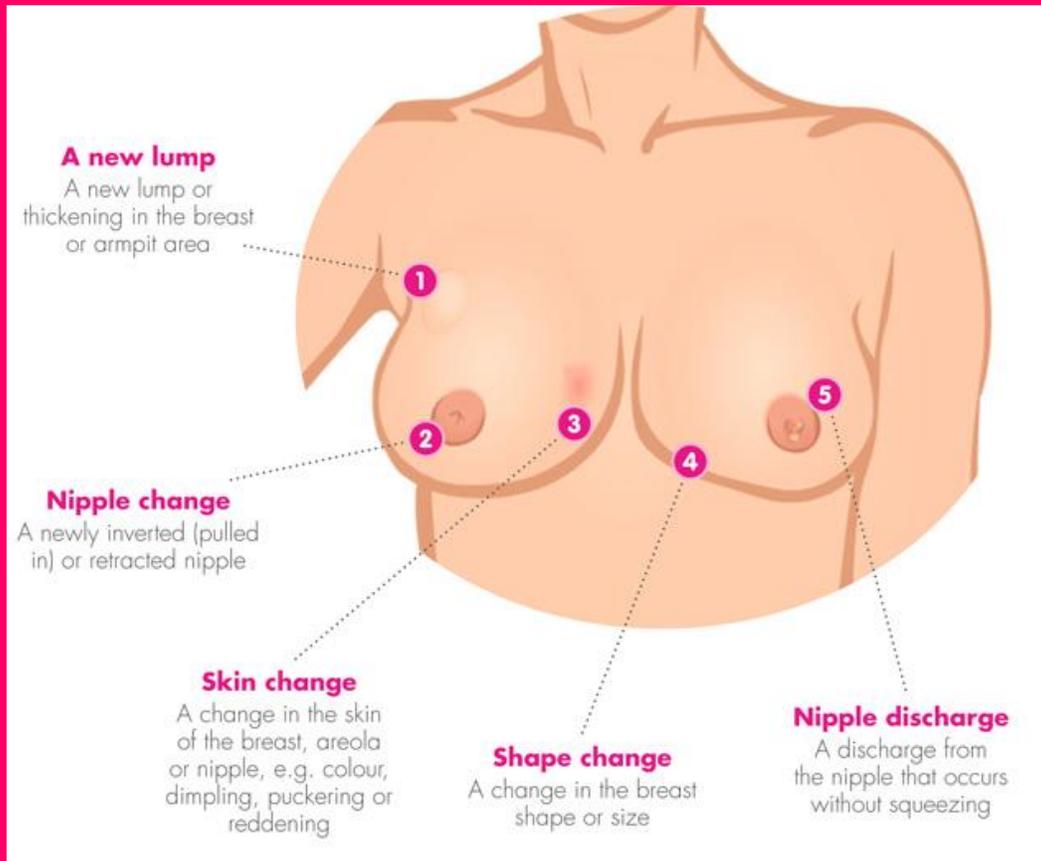
It is estimated that 1 out of 8 women and 1 out of 1000 men will develop breast cancer. One of several factors that increase the risk of developing breast cancer is genetics. If a family member or several family members were diagnosed with breast cancer, then your risk of developing breast cancer increases.

Early detection and treatment plans are essential to decreasing the mortality rate from breast cancer. Monthly self exams can be done in the privacy of your own home at your own convenience. For a more in depth screening, scheduling a mammogram is encouraged. Usually the age suggested for women to start getting mammograms is forty and then every two years afterwards. However, if there is a family history of breast cancer then your doctor may want you to have a mammogram every year.

## Signs and Symptoms

Finding a lump during a self breast exam does not indicate 100% that you have breast cancer but should be examined to determine if it is cancerous. Some people may experience the following:

- Swelling of all or part of a breast (even if no distinct lump is felt)
- Skin irritation or dimpling
- Breast or nipple pain (lumps may also be painless)
- Nipple retraction (turning inward)
- Redness, scale like, or thickening of the nipple or breast skin
- Nipple discharge (other than breast milk)



## *Breast Cancer Myths*



### **Finding a lump in your breast means you have cancer.**

**False.** A finding a lump does not indicate 100% that cancer is present. A cyst (which is an air/fluid filled sac) can be found in breast tissue. Be aware that a cyst can become cancerous and should still be examined to determine if cancerous.

### **Men do not get breast cancer.**

**False.** Men can also develop breast cancer. It is estimated that 2,190 men will be diagnosed with breast cancer each year and 410 men will die from it.

### **Getting a mammogram will cause the cancer to spread**

**False.** A mammogram, or x-ray of the breast, currently remains the gold standard for the early detection of breast cancer. Breast compression while getting a mammogram cannot cause cancer to spread. According to the National Cancer Institute, "The benefits of mammography, however, nearly always outweigh the potential harm from the radiation exposure. Mammograms require very small doses of radiation. The risk of harm from this radiation exposure is extremely low."

### **Only individuals with a family history have to worry about developing breast cancer**

**False.** Although the risk of developing breast cancer increases when there is a family history of it, breast cancer tends to develop more often in women with no family history. Statistically only 10% of women diagnosed with breast cancer have a family history of it.

*Do a Self exam and try to do them the same day each month!!!*

# SAVE YOUR LIFE IN THE SHOWER

Choose a day each month to make breast self-examination a regular part of your good health routine.

Soapy fingers glide easily over wet skin in the shower.

Use your fingers pads to examine one breast at a time. Don't miss any area, including behind the nipple, breastbone, collarbone, upper chest, bra line, between the breasts and the armpit. Feel for any unusual lump, mass or thickening under the skin. Move your fingers in a circular motion while doing

**LINES,  
CIRCLES &  
WEDGES.**



## AFTER YOUR SHOWER

Look in the mirror for the unusual:

- Nipple retraction
- Redness or scaling
- Dimpling or puckering
- Nipple discharge
- Changes in *your* breast shape



Stand with your arms at your sides.



Lean toward the mirror, hands on your hips, pull your shoulders and elbows forward with a hugging motion and look carefully.

Look again bending forward at the waist.



Raise your hands behind your head to see the underside of your breasts.



Lie on your back with an arm over your head and a towel under your shoulder. Repeat your lines, circles and wedges to feel for unusual lumps, masses or thickening under the skin.

Lotion or powder makes your fingers glide easier.

## LYMPH NODE CHECK



Roll your shoulder forward with hands on your waist. Feel for an enlarged lymph node. It may feel like a corn kernel or a bean.



With your arm at your down, sweep down the outer, middle and inner areas from collar bone to nipple.



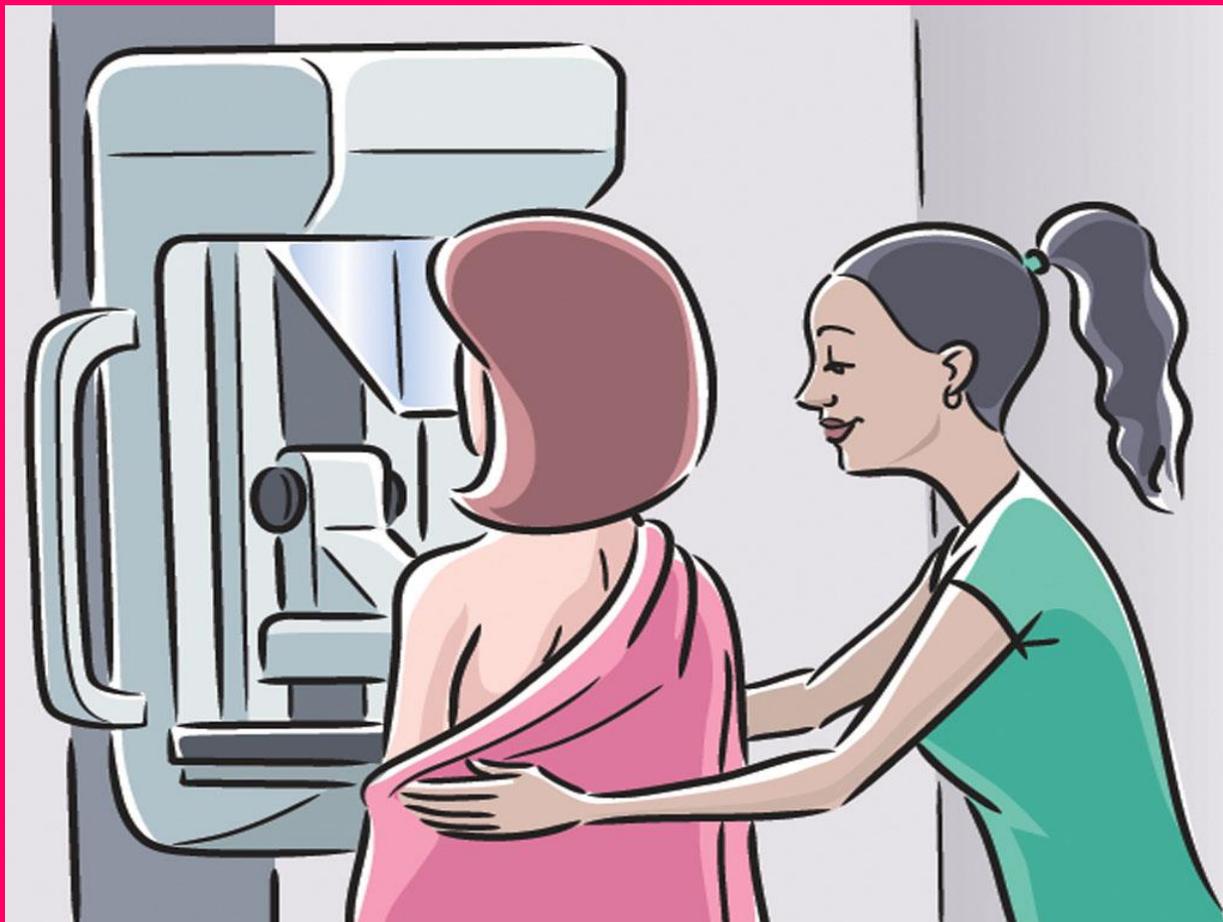
Woman's

***Mammograms:*** For a first time patient or even if you have received a mammogram before here is a helpful video that helps to explain what goes on during the process that you may not be aware of.

**“Your First Mammogram: What to Expect”**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-GmNmPegHQ>

by MD Anderson Cancer Center



## *Fun activities for your chapter and ways to show your support during October Breast Cancer Awareness Month*

\*Wearing clothing or buying products from companies that says you support fighting breast cancer is a great way to show your support and spread the message. However, be aware that some vendors only donate a small percentage that actually goes towards breast cancer research, education, and treatment.

\*A simple classic way of showing your support of fighting breast cancer awareness is to **wear a pink ribbon**. Make sure to check that a percentage of the pink ribbon sales will go to breast cancer research and not just making a profit for the vendor.

\*Having a **pink bake sale** is a fun and tasty way to raise funds. From cakes to drinks, people love to eat! To top it off they'll know they're helping to end breast cancer!



\*Hold your own **walk-a-thon**. This is another great way to actively help and a large percentage of the funds raised can be donated to breast cancer research. Be aware that some officially organized walk-a-thons only donate a small percentage because of the cost to hold these events.

\*Throw a **Bra-Pong!** It's a fun and unique way to raise funds!



\*Make an announcement at your work saying you're raising funds to help fight breast cancer. **Pass that cookie jar around!**



## *References*

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