

# Women's Health - Breast Cancer Awareness

One out of every ten women will develop breast cancer during their lifetime. Breast cancer can strike women of all ages, but women over 50 are at the greatest risk. Most physicians recommend that women around the age of 20 learn to perform routine breast self-examination. A routine self-exam helps in early detection, and early detection is the key to improving outcomes with treatment. If you are unsure how to perform a self-exam, you should discuss the procedure with your physician. Also your physician may conduct a clinical breast exam, about once every three years starting at around age 20, and usually once a year for women over age 40. Your physician may also schedule you for a mammography. This involves a special X-ray type device which is used as an advance screening device. It does not detect cancer, but does help as an early detection device to identify suspicious tissue within the breast. A mammography usually takes 15 to 20 minutes and is worth every minute as an early detection tool.

Some women are at greater risk than others. Every woman should be aware of the risk factors. Some risk factors include age, genetics, and variations in a woman's cycle. Age and genetics are easy risk to understand. As you age your chances of getting breast cancer

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## Stay Healthy

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increase. Also if you have a family history of breast cancer then your risks also increase. The link between a woman's cycle and breast cancer is a little more challenging to understand. It appears at this time that there is a link with variations in hormone levels over time. For example women who have an early period and/or have no children have increased exposure to estrogen and a corresponding increase in breast cancer cases.

If you have any further concerns or questions, it is always recommended that you discuss them with your local physician or call the Breast Center of your choice, usually located at most hospitals.