

Hope & Healing

Breast Cancer Early Detection of Breast Cancer

A heart at peace gives life to the body — Proverbs 14:30

Introduction _____

Breast Cancer is among the most common and the most feared cancers affecting women today. One woman in ten is expected to be diagnosed with the disease. Although breast cancer is a very serious condition, it can be effectively dealt with, if treated early. Using the information below has been shown to be beneficial in finding the disease while it can still be cured.

How Breast Cancer Begins _____

Breast cancer begins when a single breast cell begins to grow uncontrollably. The cell splits to become two. Then, these two quickly become four and four become eight. Very soon there are enough cancer cells massed together to form what is called a dominant lump. This lump can be felt by your fingers or seen on a mammogram x-ray. The crucial key to curing breast cancer is early detection of this dominant lump. It is important to find the lump before it gets to be 3/4 of an inch across and remove it. How to recognize a dominant lump is described in the next section. If you find one when you examine your breasts, report it to your doctor immediately.

The Search for a Dominant Lump

Place your tongue against your cheek inside your mouth and push out. Now, place your fingers on the outside of your cheek and feel the lump your tongue makes. This is what a dominant lump feels like. If a dominant lump is found, it doesn't matter what size it is,

and it doesn't matter if you have had a recent mammogram, you should see your doctor immediately. Most dominant lumps will need to be removed by a surgeon.

There are many sad stories of women who had a delay before a dominant lump was biopsied (surgically removed) and when the biopsy was finally done, the cancer had already spread. Who should search for the dominant lump? Every woman. If you fit into one of the groups described below, you may have a greater chance of getting breast cancer.

Women at Greatest Risk of Getting Breast Cancer _____

1. Women with a mother or sister who had breast cancer, especially if the cancer was discovered when they were in their 30's or 40's.
2. Women with cancer in one breast. The chance of getting cancer in the other is increased.
3. Women who have never been pregnant, or who became pregnant for the first time after age 30.
4. Women who began menstruating in their early teens.
5. Women who experience menopause in their late 40's or early 50's.
6. Women who are overweight, who exercise too little, or who eat too much fat are also thought to be at increased risk.

Three Ways to Find the Dominant Lump _____

Now let's look at the three ways that you should use to help search for the dominant lump.

Method #1 — Self Examination

Examine your breasts each month, two days after each menstrual period, or if you do not have periods, on a specific day of the month, each month.

How to examine your breasts:

Lie down and put a pillow under your right shoulder. Place your right arm behind your head. Using the finger pads of the three middle fingers of your left hand, examine your breast - including the area between the breast and the armpit, and the armpit itself.

Roll the breast tissue in a small circle, pressing the tissue firmly. Work in an up-and-down pattern, moving from the outer edge of the breast to the inner margins. When finished, repeat the procedure on the left breast.

After you have examined both breasts, stand in front of a mirror and check for any irregularities, including nipple changes or the skin of your breast becoming dimpled like an orange peel.

What you may feel with your fingers:

The whole idea with self-examination of your breasts is for you to become familiar with how your breasts feel and look so that a change in appearance or texture can be detected. Not all breast lumps are cancerous. Breast tissue can sometimes have a natural lumpiness or bumpiness, like tiny grapes under the skin. This condition is caused by tiny cysts under the skin, and does not require treatment. But, if you detect a

change in appearance, or feel a dominant lump, don't wait, have your doctor examine it.

Method #2 — Medical Examination

Have your doctor examine your breasts each year.

Method #3 — Mammogram

If you are 35-39 and haven't had a mammogram, ask your doctor's advice about it. If you are 40-49, have a mammogram performed every one or two years depending on your doctor's advice. If you are 50 or older, have yearly mammograms.

The mammograms can detect most cases of breast cancer before they become dominant lumps. If a suspicious area is seen on the mammogram, you may be sent to a surgeon for a biopsy.

Dealing With the Dominant Lump-- The Breast Biopsy _____

A biopsy is the removal of a piece of suspicious tissue by a surgeon. After he numbs the skin over the lump, he removes the lump and closes the incision with a few stitches. Or, the biopsy may be done with a needle. Some biopsies are more extensive than others. Sometimes the surgeon can't feel a lump, but he is searching for one because of a suspicious area found in a mammogram. Tissue removed during a biopsy is immediately sent to a lab to be examined for cancer cells.

Even if the biopsy test comes back negative, there are still some questions you should ask that can help give you clues about your condition. Ask if there was any "atypical hyperplasia." This is a precancerous condition of the milk ducts and may require more frequent breast exams. If cancer cells are found, you must then consider your options for treatment.

Treatment of Breast Cancer _____

Before making a decision about treating breast cancer you need to know all of the options. This is especially the case with surgery. When surgery is

performed, the surgeon can't see the cancer cells. He or she removes what is planned to be removed before the surgery begins. This may be removal of the entire breast, an operation called a modified radical mastectomy. With this surgery the lymph glands beneath the armpit are also removed. Another surgical procedure is the removal of the breast alone, a simple mastectomy. Or, in other cases, only the lump is removed, leaving the breast intact. Following this surgery, known as a lumpectomy, the breast is usually treated with radiation to kill unseen cancer cells.

Radiation therapy, chemotherapy, or hormonal therapy may follow any of these surgeries.

About Prevention _____

To gain every advantage of not developing breast cancer you can consider the following lifestyle changes:

1. Avoid weight gain as you age.
2. Limit alcohol consumption. (If you do drink, take folic acid supplementation)
3. Exercise regularly.

An Attitude of Hope _____

Whatever treatment you and your doctor select, the one essential ingredient that you and your family can supply is an attitude of hope. New medical advances can produce excellent results without totally upending your world. Even now, research on Laser Beam Surgery shows great promise that it will become a major treatment in the future. The best choices are created when the cancer is small. The best chances are created when you supply an attitude of hope, as your doctors work out with you the best possible treatment.

Awaken the Miracles Within You

The Miracle of Doing Your Duty

Doing our duty is part of keeping our spiritual lives in order. So, what does it get us? It entitles us to a good journey filled with peace of mind and harmonious progress.

It is our duty to set aside a reasonable time each day for prayer and spiritual reading. And, we must live in God's will as far as is possible for us at the moment.

But, when we're doing all we can, that's enough.

- It is not our duty to do what is beyond our strength and reach.
- It isn't our duty to do what we don't have time to do.
- It isn't our duty to sacrifice our integrity.
- It isn't our duty to do tomorrow's task today.
- It isn't our duty to always be hurried, sad, discouraged, angry, resentful, or antagonistic under any circumstance.

The recommendations and information in this handout are appropriate in most cases. However, for specific information concerning your personal medical condition, please, consult your doctor.