

BREAST CANCER "WIKI" ALERT

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"Wiki" is the Hawaiian language word for "fast."
The intent of these "Wiki" Alerts are to provide
brief informational resources about chronic
disease issues that impact Asian Americans,
Native Hawaiians & Pacific Islanders.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Breast cancer is a type of cancer that forms in tissues of the breast. Other than skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in the U.S. It is mostly found in women, but men can get breast cancer, too. **In 2008, it is estimated that 182,460 women & 1,990 men in the U.S. will be found to have invasive breast cancer** (American Cancer Society, 2008).

A Breast Cancer Survivor's Mission

As a Sri Lankan breast cancer survivor for 15 years, Jina Peiris has taken her cancer experience and served her South Asian community and educated them about cancer and cancer survivorship. She has helped to work on local cancer survivorship research projects and more recently has played an important role as a survivor advocate at various cancer and cancer-research related conferences and meetings. She has traveled all over the country speaking to cancer researchers and scientists about the importance of including perspectives and experiences of cancer survivors and the community in developing cancer research projects. She hopes that the expertise she brings positively contributes to the elimination of health disparities. Jina has encouraged communities to be active in their health management as well as their self advocacy. She understands the political and community environments where she needs to be vocal and knows that different approaches are needed to make change happen. She encourages other survivors to strengthen their communication skills to advocate for their communities' needs.

Jina's message of hope: Talk to someone, whether it be an organization or an individual. Find the survivors and talk to everyone and anyone. Have the hope for life. Get your emotional support from your family. Give encouragement to women who need support. Educate others in the community. Advocacy is so important. Bring hope that people can survive from breast cancer.

Breast Cancer Statistics

- Only 48.5 % of Asian American, Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander women 50 years and older in the U.S. have had a mammogram or clinical breast examination within the last two years—the lowest rate of screening among all racial/ethnic groups (Komen, 2007).
- Asian American, Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander women have higher incidence of breast cancer than do Hispanic or Native American women (Office of Minority Health, 2007) .
- The number of Asian American, Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer has increased (Office of Minority Health, 2007).
- For Asian Americans who immigrated to the United States at least a decade ago, the risk of breast cancer is 80 % higher than that of new immigrants (Ziegler et al., 1993). For those born in the U.S., the breast cancer risk is similar to that of Caucasian women (Kagawa-Singer, 2001). Chinese American and Japanese American women have higher rates of breast cancer than women of their same age in China and Japan (Office of Minority Health, 2007).
- Native Hawaiians have the third highest breast cancer mortality rate in the nation and the highest breast cancer mortality rate in the state of Hawai'i (Miller, et al, 1996).
- In an 11-year (1995-2005) evaluation of all breast cancer diagnoses in the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands (CNMI), 42.6% of breast cancers occurred in women less than 50 years of age, followed by women between 50-64 with 32.6%, and then by women 65 years and older with 24.8% (CNMI Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan, 2007).

Cancer Prevention



Eat more vegetables and fruits to lower chances of cancer

People can lower their chances of getting cancer by:

- **Eating a variety of healthy foods.**
 - Choose foods with less fat.
 - Limit intake of processed and red meats.
 - Eat 5 or more servings of an assortment of colorful vegetables and fruits every day.
 - Choose whole grains.
- **Not smoking or chewing tobacco.** Not smoking is one of the most important health decision you can make.
- **Limiting alcohol consumption.** Use of alcohol is clearly linked to an increased risk of developing breast cancer. The American Cancer Society recommends that women limit their consumption of alcohol to no more than one drink per day.
- **Exercising regularly, controlling your weight, and having a healthy lifestyle.** Research has shown that physical activity plays a role in reducing cancer risk. Being overweight or obese has been found to increase breast cancer risk, so it is important to maintain a healthy weight for your height, age, and gender. To reduce your risk try to be physically active for at least 30 minutes a day.
- **Getting regular checkups and screenings.** Early detection and treatment can increase your chance for survival. This is especially important for people with a family history of cancer.



Stay active and maintain a healthy weight

Recommendations for Breast Cancer Screening

There are things you can do to find breast cancer early:

- **Get to know your breasts by doing a breast self-exam.** You may do monthly breast self-exams to check for any changes in your breasts, such as lumps, pain or redness. If you find a change, see your doctor right away.
- **Women in their 20s and 30s should have a clinical breast exam every 3 years. While women over 40 should have the clinical breast exam every year.** This is a breast exam done by your doctor or nurse. She or he will check your breasts and underarms for any lumps, nipple discharge, or other changes. The breast exam should be part of a routine check up.
- **All women starting at the age of 40 should get a mammogram every one to two years.** A mammogram is an x-ray picture of the breast that can find breast cancer that is too small for you or your doctor to feel. If your mother or sister had breast cancer, you may need to start getting mammograms earlier.



See your doctor regularly and get screened



State Breast Screening Programs

Each state provides a comprehensive breast and cervical cancer detection program for older women. If you are uninsured or underinsured, contact your state health departments to see if you are eligible for their free to low-cost breast cancer screenings. **To find your local program go to <http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/NBCCEDP/>.**