

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, and Pacific Islanders (AAs and NHPs).

October is
Breast
Cancer
Awareness
Month



Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers among women in the U.S.

Breast Cancer



Breast cancer is a type of cancer that forms in the tissues of the breast.

Research has shown that women with certain **risk factors** are more likely than others to develop breast cancer.

- **Age:** The chance of getting breast cancer goes up as a woman gets older.
- **Family history:** A woman's risk doubles if her mother, sister or daughter has had breast cancer.
- **Reproductive history:** Women who have never had children are at an increased risk.
- **Lack of physical activity:** Women who are not physically active throughout life may have an increased risk.
- **Being overweight or obese:** The chance of getting breast cancer after menopause is higher in women who are overweight or obese.
- **Drinking alcohol:** The more alcohol a woman drinks, the greater her risk of developing breast cancer.

Breast Cancer Statistics

- In 2009, an estimated 192,370 U.S. women will be diagnosed with breast cancer along with 1,910 U.S. men (American Cancer Society, 2009).
- An estimated 40,170 of U.S. women will die from breast cancer this year (American Cancer Society, 2009).
- 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).
- Breast cancer was the leading cancer in each female Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander group, with the exception of Laotian women (Miller et al, 2007).
- Breast cancer incidence was highest among Native Hawaiian women and exceeded the rate in non-Hispanic white women (Miller et al, 2007).
- In California, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander women have some of the lowest rates of breast and cervical cancer screening (Pap test, mammography, and clinical breast examination) (Kagawa-Singer & Pourat, 2000).

Even though research has shown the various risk factors in developing breast cancer, there are many **misconceptions** about breast cancer.

Myth 1: Breast cancer is contagious.

Fact: You cannot catch it from another person.

Myth 2: A mammogram can cause breast cancer to spread.

Fact: There are strict guidelines to ensure that mammogram equipment is safe and uses the lowest dose of radiation possible. It does not increase the risk for breast cancer.

Myth 3: Finding a lump means I have breast cancer.

Fact: Some lumps are not cancerous, but you should still have any lumps checked by a doctor or nurse.

Myth 4: Men do not get breast cancer.

Fact: In a year, one percent of individuals diagnosed with breast cancer are men.

Myth 5: No one in my family has ever had cancer, so I won't get it.

Fact: All women are at risk for breast cancer, particularly as they get older.

Myth 6: I have no symptoms, so I can't have cancer.

Fact: There are no symptoms in the early stages of breast cancer. A mammogram can detect very small tumors before they can be felt.

Breast Health Screening Guidelines

	Monthly	Every 3 years	Yearly
Breast self examination (optional)	Starting in your 20s		
Clinical breast examination		In your 20s and 30s	Starting at age 40
Mammogram			Starting at age 40

Remember the ABCs of Breast Health:
A screening mammogram
Breast self examination
Clinical breast examination

Breast Self Examination

Get to know your breasts by doing a breast self examination (BSE). You may do monthly BSEs to check for any changes in your breasts, such as lumps, pain, discharge, or redness. The best time to examine your breasts is right after your period and when the breasts are not tender or swollen.

Follow the 7 "Ps" of BSE:

1. Positions

- *Stand* to look at your breasts in front of the mirror to see changes in size, shape, color, and texture of the nipples and breast.

- *Lie down* and place one of your arms behind your head.

2. Perimeter

- Examine armpit down to bra line, across the bra line, up the breastbone, across the collarbone, and back to armpit.

3. Palpation With Pad of Fingers

- Use the pads of your three middle fingers to feel for lumps. Move fingers in dime-size circles.

4. Pressure

- Use three levels of pressure for each palpation, from light to deep to examine the full thickness of your

breast tissue.

5. Pattern of Search

- Use an up and down pattern when examining the perimeter of the breast tissue. Go slowly to cover every inch of the breast tissue.

6. Practice With Feedback

- Have your doctor or nurse show you how to do a BSE.

7. Plan of Action

- If you choose to do so, perform the BSE monthly. With practice, it may take about 15 minutes.
- Report any breast changes to your doctor or nurse right away.



Report any breast changes to your doctor.

Clinical Breast Examination

Clinical breast examination (CBE) is a breast exam done by your doctor or nurse. Women in their 20s and 30s should have a clinical CBE every 3 years. While women over 40 should have a CBE every year.

For this exam, you will be asked to undress from the waist up. She or he will check the look of the breasts and underarm for any changes or abnormalities, such as in the size, shape, or color. Then she or he will feel (palpate) your breasts using the pads of their fingers to feel for any lumps. The breasts are checked while you are sitting up and while you are lying down. The breast exam should be part of a routine checkup and a complement to a mammogram.

Ask your doctor or nurse to teach you how to examine your breasts the right way.

Mammogram

All women starting at the age of 40 should get a mammogram every one to two years. If your mother or sister had breast cancer, you may need to start getting mammograms earlier. **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.** There are strict guidelines to ensure that mammogram equipment is safe and uses the lowest dose of radiation possible.

For the exam, you will need to undress from the waist up, so it is a good idea to wear a shirt that you can remove easily. Avoid wearing deodorants, antiperspirants, perfumes, powders, or lotions under your arms or on your breasts the day of the exam, since some of these contain substances that can show up on an x-ray film.

During the exam, each breast is compressed between two plates for a few seconds and an x-ray image is made. A view from the top and another from the side are taken. The pressure on the breasts can be uncomfortable, thus taking acetaminophen or ibuprofen an hour before the exam may help. The entire procedure for a screening mammogram takes approximately 20 minutes.