

# Breast Cancer Awareness

## OCTOBER IS BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

This is the time to reflect on those who have fought against this disease and lost and those that have triumphed. It is estimated that more than 190,000 women in the U.S. will be diagnosed with breast cancer and 40,000 will die of the disease. There are several steps you can take to help protect yourself.

### SELF BREAST EXAMS

### MAMMOGRAM SCREENING

The American Cancer Society recommends annual mammograms for women starting at 40 years of age. If 90% of women 40 and older received regular breast cancer screening, approximately 3,700 lives could be saved each year. If you are concerned about mammograms, talk to your doctor about your individual risks.



The American Cancer Society says that breast self-exam is optional in breast cancer screening, but it is important for women to be familiar with their breasts and have good breast health awareness. Any abnormalities should be reported to your doctor immediately for further screening.

### RISK FACTORS FOR BREAST CANCER

#### UN-MODIFIABLE RISK FACTORS

Gender – females are 100 xs more likely than males to get breast cancer.  
Age – chances increase, as you get older.  
Genes – certain mutations can increase your risk significantly. Family History – you are much more likely to get breast cancer if you have had a close relative with the disease.  
Personal History – having cancer in one breast puts you at risk for cancer in the

other breast.

Race – white women are more likely to get breast cancer, but African-American women are more likely to die of the disease.

Dense breast tissue – more gland tissue and less fatty tissue increases the risk and makes it more difficult for doctors to spot tumors.

Benign breast problems – certain non-cancer breast changes can increase the risk of breast cancer.

Menstrual periods – women menstruating before age 12 or entering menopause after age 55 have an increased risk of breast cancer.

Breast radiation early in life (<40) – chest radiation, especially in teens, increases risk.

Treatment with DES – Diethylstilbestrol was formerly used to lower the chance of miscarriage in pregnant women. It has been shown to increase the risk of breast cancer.

### TRUTH VS. MYTH

#### MODIFIABLE RISK FACTORS

Not having children – never giving birth or having your 1<sup>st</sup> child after age 30 increases your risk.

Recent use of birth control pills – this risk goes away after a person stops taking them.  
Hormone therapy for menopause – combined therapy (estrogen/progesterone) has a greater risk than estrogen alone.

Not breast-feeding – breast-feeding has been shown to lower risk slightly.  
Alcohol use – the American Cancer Society recommends one drink/day limit.  
Overweight/Obesity – excessive fat around the waist increases risk. Lack of exercise – the American Cancer Society recommends 45-60 minutes of exercise (even walking) five or more days per week.

### TRUTH VS. MYTH CONT.

1. Only women with a family history get BC → MYTH, 70% of all cases have no family history.
2. Underwire bras cause BC → MYTH
3. Most lumps are cancer → MYTH (80% of all lumps are benign)

4. Breast implants increase your risk → MYTH
5. Small breasted women have less risk → MYTH
6. Antiperspirant use increases risk → MYTH
7. If your mammogram is negative, there is nothing to worry about → MYTH (fails to detect 10-20% of tumors)
8. There are drugs to help reduce risk → TRUTH (there are drugs available for high risk women to help reduce risk)