

# Chronic Disease Prevention Bulletin

October 2005



## Early Detection of Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is one of the most frequently diagnosed cancers in women. Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in American women today. It is very important that women stay informed and updated so that they can make good decisions about their health.

Regular check-ups with your physician is important in helping detect early problems. For women age 40 and over, it is recommended that you have a mammogram and clinical breast exam yearly. For women in their 20's and 30's, it is recommended that you have a clinical breast exam at least every three years. For women in their 20's, it is important that you perform breast self-exams on a regular basis. You may want to check with your physician regarding the standard schedule based on your personal and family health history.

There are some early warning signs that you should be aware of and watch for. These include:

- A lump which is usually single, firm and usually painless.
- Swelling and an unusual appearance on a portion of the skin on the breast or underarm.
- Veins on the skin surface become more prominent on one breast.
- The breast nipple may become inverted, develop a rash, have changes in skin texture or has a discharge.

Although a family history of breast cancer may lead to an increased risk, most women who are diagnosed with breast cancer have no family history.

## Breast Self-Exams (BSE)

It is recommended by The American Cancer Society that women should perform breast self-exams (BSE) at home once a month starting at the age of 20. Performing a BSE can help you become familiar with how you're your breasts normally look and feel. This will help you identify any changes to your breast that need to be reported to your physician. Contact your doctor / physician immediately if any changes are found. The following tips will help you perform a BSE correctly.

- Lie down & place your right arm behind head.
- Use the finger pads of the 3 middle fingers on your left hand to feel for lumps in the right breast. Use overlapping dime sized circular motions of the finger pads to feel the breast tissue.
- Use 3 different levels of pressure to feel all the breast tissue. Light pressure is needed to feel the tissue closest to the chest and ribs. A firm ridge in the lower curve of each breast is normal.
- Move around the breast in an up & down pattern starting at an imaginary line drawn straight down your side from the underarm & moving across the breast to the middle of the chest bone.
- Repeat the exam on your left breast
- While standing in front of a mirror with your hands pressing firmly down on the hips, check your breast for any changes in size, shape, contour or dimpling.
- Examine each underarm while sitting up or standing and with your arm slightly raised so you can easily feel this area. Raising your arm straight up tightens the tissue and makes it very difficult to examine.

## Women's Clinical Breast Exams (CBE) & Mammograms

Screening Test    Ages 18-39    Ages 40-49    Ages 50-64    Ages 65+

Clinical Breast Exam (CBE)	Yearly	Yearly	Yearly	Yearly
Mammogram (X-Ray)	Every 1-2 Yrs	Every 1-2 Yrs	Every 1-2 Yrs	Every 1-2 Yrs

It is good to have a CBE to detect abnormal conditions before having a Mammogram. Consult your doctor for more information.

### Breast Cancer Facts

Did you know that every two minutes a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer? It is predicted that this year more than 211,000 new cases will be diagnosed in the United States. Breast cancer is the leading cause of death in women between the ages of 40 and 55.

- One in eight women who lives to the age of 85 will develop breast cancer during their lifetime.
- Men: Breast cancer is not limited to just women. 1,600 men are expected to be diagnosed with breast cancer this year.
- Seventy percent of all breast cancers are found through breast self-exams. However, not all lumps are found by touch. Regular mammograms are necessary.
- When breast cancer is found early, the five year survival rate is 96%. That means that in the United States today there are over 2 million breast cancer survivors.

**Tip:** According to the American Cancer Society, breast feeding your baby lowers your risk of developing breast cancer.

## Healthy Lifestyle Guidelines

While some risk factors are uncontrollable, there are some general health guidelines that women can do to help prevent breast cancer.

- Always avoid using tobacco products
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Include grains, vegetables and fruits in a well balanced diet
- Do physical activity / exercise for 30 minutes 5 to 7 days per week
- Limit your stress
- Get plenty of sleep each night
- Maintain regular healthcare check-ups
- Be informed about current medical conditions that you have or may be at risk of developing and know how to control them
- Limit alcohol consumption
- Discuss hormone replacement therapy with your physician. Long term use can increase your risk for breast cancer

### Sources:

<http://www.cancer.org>  
<http://www.positivepromotions.com>  
<http://www.channingbete.com>

### Additional Resources:

<http://www.cdc.gov/az.do>  
<http://www.cdc.gov/spanish/cancer/>  
<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/>

Note: The nhlbi.nih.gov resource has health information in 26 languages.



The Live Healthy Georgia campaign was launched in March 2004 by the Georgia Department of Human Resources in partnership with Governor Sonny Perdue. The campaign promotes five key messages to improve the health of Georgians: Be Active, Eat Healthy, Be Smoke Free, Get Checked, and Be Positive.