

## BREAST CANCER

Recently, several ladies in my practice were diagnosed with breast cancer ranging from early ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS) to advanced cancer with metastasis. Although an abundant amount of information is available about breast cancer, some women had difficulty understanding the kind of breast cancer they have and the different treatment options available. I dedicate this article to them, wishing all of them the best.

Breast cancer is the second most common cancer among women, with approximately 200,000 new cases of breast cancer diagnosed in the United States of America annually and approximately 50,000 cancer deaths. There have been important advances in our understanding of the biology and genetics of this disease and, if diagnosed early, breast cancer is highly curable.

Numerous factors appear to increase the risk of developing breast cancer. These include: 1. Family history

2. Taking estrogen medication
3. Reproductive history
4. Diet (alcohol intake)
5. Radiation exposure

However, the single most powerful risk factor for breast cancer is gender (female) and age (over 50 years old). Together, these account for nearly 75% of all breast cancers.

Less powerful risks include a family or personal history of breast cancer, estrogen and/or alcohol intake and previously diagnosed ADH and/or DCIS.

It is very important to know that the majority of breast biopsies done in the USA are done for benign (non-cancerous) breast masses. 90% of breast calcifications and 70% of breast masses are benign and with advances of mammogram and the awareness of breast cancer, more and more breast tumors are discovered early leading to better prognoses and less invasive surgical intervention.

The most common benign tumors are: 1.

Breast cyst

2. Fibroadenoma
3. Intraductal papilloma (which is responsible for most of the bloody discharge from the nipple)

The treatment is usually excisional biopsy.

The cancerous tumors are:

1. ADH
2. DCIS/LCIS
3. Lobular carcinoma
4. Ductal carcinoma
5. Paget's disease (crusty nipples)

Treatments for cancer are:

1. Excisional biopsy
2. Simple mastectomy
3. Mastectomy with node removal (Sentinel node versus axillary dissection)
4. Excisional biopsy with node removal
5. Radiation to the breast as a primary treatment or along with surgical intervention
6. Chemotherapy with advanced breast cancer

Depending on the size of tumor and on the involvement of axillary lymph nodes or distant metastasis, the cancer staging ranges from 0 to IV with five years relative cancer survival rate being 85%.

Research is making headway in preparing a vaccine for breast cancer that makes cancer cells more sensitive to chemotherapy and to identify certain people or families with genetic predisposition for breast cancer and ovarian cancer.

With all the advances, the most important factors in fighting breast cancer is still frequent self-breast examination once a month, a yearly breast exam by your doctor and frequent mammograms as recommended by the American Cancer Society. From age:

- 4 34-40 Baseline mammogram
- + 40-50 Mammogram every one year
- 4 Over 50 Mammogram every year

High risk patients have more frequent mammograms.

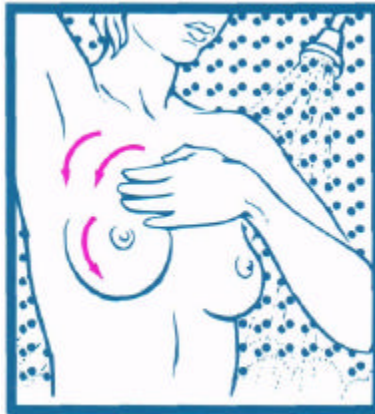
For more information consult your doctor.

The following is a simple guideline on how to do self-breast exam and what to look for:

## How to do a Breast Exam:

All women should check their breasts for lumps, thicknesses, or other changes every month. By examining your breasts regularly, you will know how your breasts normally feel. If a change should happen in your breasts, you will be able to identify it and let your doctor know.

### USE THE SHOWER CHECK



*1 Check your breasts about one week after your period.*

*2 Press firmly with the pads of your fingers. Move your left hand over your right breast in a circle. Make sure to check all over and include the armpit.*

*3 Now check your left breast with your right hand in the same way.*

*You should also look at your breasts in a mirror. Look for any changes in how your breasts look.*

If you find any lumps, thickenings, or changes, tell your doctor right away. Most breast lumps are not cancer, but you don't know if you don't ask. Breast cancer may be successfully treated if you find it early.