The Life-Saving Power of Screenings

We all know that the best defense against breast cancer starts with early detection. But what exactly does that mean, and what should women be looking for?

For many women, a lump in breast tissue is a tell-tale sign that something is wrong. But there are other symptoms that could point to breast cancer, including:

- Unusual lumps in the breast or armpit
- A dimple on the breast
- A change in breast size, shape, texture or temperature
- Reddish, pitted skin
- A change in the nipple
- Unusual nipple discharge

“It’s so important to know your body and routinely examine your breasts,” said Paul Kim, M.D., lead physician, Breast Diagnostic Center, Kaiser Permanente Panorama City. “If you find a lump or other unusual change, make an appointment with your doctor to have it checked, even if your screening mammogram is negative, because your doctor may order additional tests.”

For women between ages 40-74 with no abnormal breast symptoms, mammograms are offered or recommended every 1-2 years. “If our members are not sure they’re due for a mammogram, our electronic medical record system will alert our providers they are due, allowing for same-day, preventable screenings,” said Dr. Kim. Kaiser Permanente also offers our members appointment-free mammograms, on a walk-in basis.

“We encourage our members to take advantage of our walk-in screenings,” added Dr. Kim, “Mammograms really do save lives.”

Kaiser Permanente members can self-refer and walk in for a screening mammogram any-time—even if you do not have a referral or order from a doctor. Mammograms are available at most Kaiser Permanente Panorama City Medical Center Area medical offices—including North Hollywood Medical Offices, Panorama City Medical Center, and Santa Clarita Medical Offices.

MORE HEALTHY HABITS FOR WOMEN

Nothing matters more than your health—and many of the biggest health risks for women are preventable. Simple things like regular screenings and making healthy lifestyle choices can help you stay healthier, longer.

TAKE YOUR HEALTH TO HEART

You may think of heart disease as a men’s health issue—but it’s not. The good news is that lifestyle changes can prevent 80% of heart attacks and strokes. Eat right, exercise, don’t smoke, and talk to your doctor about your risk.

BE PROACTIVE

Stay on top of breast and cervical cancer screenings. If you’re pregnant, start prenatal care early. Share your family health history with your doctor. Most importantly, listen to your body—and get care when you need it.

CARE FOR THE WHOLE YOU

With all you do, it can be easy to put your needs last, which can leave you feeling drained, stressed, or depressed. Sleeping and eating well and connecting with others is important—and if you’re struggling, ask for help.

Live your best, healthiest life. For more information, visit kp.org/womenshealth
“What a stellar staff! Thank you doesn’t begin to express my deepest gratitude.”

Patricia S.
Sheila R. Veloz Breast Center
Patient

THIS IS QUALITY HEALTHCARE

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October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month:
What You Need to Know and How You Can Help

As National Breast Cancer Awareness Month is underway, the American Cancer Society says remarkable progress against the disease should not obscure the significant challenges remaining.

THE FACTS
Thanks to largely stable incidence rates, improved treatment, as well as earlier detection through screening and increased awareness, a woman’s risk of dying of breast cancer dropped 39 percent between the late 1980s and 2015, translating into more than 300,000 breast cancer deaths avoided during that time.

Despite that progress, there’s much more to be done. Breast cancer is still the second-leading cause of cancer death in women, second only to lung cancer. There is still a large racial gap in mortality, with African-American women having higher death rates compared to whites, even in incidence rates are similar.

The American Cancer Society’s estimates for breast cancer in the United States for 2018 are:
• About 266,120 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed in women.
• About 63,960 new cases of carcinoma in situ (CIS) will be diagnosed (CIS is non-invasive and is the earliest form of breast cancer).
• About 40,920 women will die from breast cancer.
• While black and white women get breast cancer at roughly the same rate, the mortality rate is 42% higher among black women than white women.

At this time, there are more than 3.1 million people with a history of breast cancer in the United States. (This includes women who are currently being treated and those who have completed treatment.)

RISK FACTORS
• Numerous studies have confirmed that alcohol consumption increases the risk of breast cancer in women by about 7%-10% for each one drink of alcohol consumed per day on average. Women who have 2-3 alcoholic drinks per day have a 20 percent higher risk of breast cancer compared to non-drinkers.
• Obesity increases the risk of postmenopausal breast cancer. Risk is about 1.5 times higher in overweight women and about 2 times higher in obese women than in lean women.
• Growing evidence suggests that women who get regular physical activity have a 10%-25% lower risk of breast cancer compared to women who are inactive, with stronger evidence for postmenopausal than premenopausal women.
• Limited but accumulating research indicates that smoking may slightly increase breast cancer risk, particularly long-term, heavy smoking and among women who start smoking before their first pregnancy.

If you or someone you love are concerned about developing breast cancer, has been recently diagnosed, are going through treatment, or are trying to stay well after treatment, the American Cancer Society provides important information on these topics and more.

WHAT THE AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY IS DOING
The ACS currently funds 155 multi-year grants focused on breast cancer totaling $60.2 million. We have played a key role in many of the advances against breast cancer, including funding early work that eventually led to the development of tamoxifen and Herceptin. Join us and help save lives from breast cancer: Fundraise and participate in one of more than 250 Making Strides events or participate virtually at makestrideswalk.org. The American Cancer Society’s nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) is also working to make fighting breast cancer a national priority. ACS CAN is committed to ensuring that all women have the opportunity to receive lifesaving cancer screenings and services. Working in all 50 states and Washington, D.C., ACS-CAN advocates for adequate funding for early detection programs that provide access to affordable breast cancer screenings and diagnostic services to low-income, uninsured and underserved women.

Information for this article was provided by the American Cancer Society.

To learn more about ACS CAN’s advocacy work and to help make fighting breast cancer a priority in your community, visit accscan.org/makingstrides.

NATIONAL GRASSROOTS INITIATIVE ADDRESSES FEARS
When pink season arrives each October, much attention is focused on encouraging women to know their risk of breast cancer and get annual breast screenings, but we often fail to address the fears that block those efforts.

Last year, Breastcancer.org, a nonprofit organization and the world’s leading online resource for breast cancer and breast health information and support, launched “Take the Fright Out of Breast Cancer,” a national grassroots initiative to turn Halloween into a celebration with a purpose to replace the fear of breast cancer with knowledge that will help women reduce their risk of the disease or its recurrence and learn what they need to know about early detection and testing options.

“In my opinion, being diagnosed with breast cancer is one of every woman’s greatest fears. And as a breast oncologist and breast cancer survivor, I also know the fear of cancer coming back is always there,” explained Marisa Weiss, M.D., founder and chief medical officer, Breastcancer.org. “For too often, women miss the opportunity for potentially life-saving treatments because they fear going to the doctor, ignore a lump, or avoid getting an annual mammogram. We launched Take the Fright Out to empower women with the knowledge, clarity, and confidence they need to make health decisions assuredly and lessen the fears and anxieties women associate with this disease.”

During this Halloween season and Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Take the Fright Out of Breast Cancer aims to make orange the new pink by encouraging people to host grass-roots events across the country. Breastcancer.org is asking people to join Take the Fright Out this fall by hosting an event and raising funds that will allow Breastcancer.org to expand its reach and support to women who have or are worried about breast cancer. Participation is easy: it could be a bake sale at the office, a Halloween-themed ladies night out, or raising funds at a fall festival!

“Many women believe there is nothing they can do to protect themselves from this disease, even though most breast cancers are due to factors we can change or avoid,” said Dr. Weiss. “Only 10% of breast cancers are largely due to an inherited genetic mutation, such as BRCA1 or BRCA2. Even if you start changing key lifestyle factors at age 50, you can lower your risk of breast cancer by 50 percent. Providing the everyday steps to lower our lifetime risk will empower women with the knowledge they need to break those barriers of fear and anxiety.”

The program will be supported by a number of leading companies that have joined together to extend the important message of the campaign. For anyone interested in hosting or participating in a local event, they can visit TakeTheFrightOut.com for more information.
A Blueprint to Beat Breast Cancer

One in eight women in the U.S. will develop breast cancer over their lifetime but many women are not aware of the steps that they can take to reduce their risk. Breast cancer is the most common, invasive cancer among women worldwide, as well as in the United States.


After analyzing decades of evidence from millions of cancer cases globally, AICR shares key findings on breast cancer risk factors and how to lower the risks.

**LIFESTYLE AND BREAST CANCER RISK**

**ALCOHOL:** Drinking alcohol increases the risk of breast cancer.

- Alcohol influences blood levels of estrogen and other hormones in ways that may make cancer more likely.
- Alcohol is a recognized carcinogen. It can cause cellular damage that can trigger cancer development.

**WEIGHT:** Excess body fat increases your risk for post-menopausal breast cancer.

- The presence of excess fat tissue causes inflammation, which can lead to cancerous mutation in healthy cells.
- Having overweight and obesity increases blood levels of insulin and related hormones that can hasten the growth of cancer.

**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY:** Sedentary behavior is linked to increased risk of cancer, while being active decreases the risk for breast cancer.

- Vigorous activity decreases the risk for pre-menopausal breast cancer. Moderate activity decreases risk for post-menopausal breast cancer.
- Regular physical activity helps regulate hormones at optimum levels.
- Some evidence indicates that people who are physically active (both before and after diagnosis) have a greater chance of surviving breast cancer.

**BREASTFEEDING:** Breastfeeding your baby lowers your risk of breast cancer.

- Breastfeeding lowers the levels of some cancer-related hormones in the mother’s body.
- At the end of breastfeeding, the body gets rid of any cells in the breast that may have DNA damage.

- Science shows that living a cancer protective lifestyle – by making lifestyle decisions such as avoiding alcohol, being healthy weight, being physically active, eating a diet rich in whole grains, vegetables, fruits, and beans can reduce risk for cancer.

- “You can start today to take the first step to lower your risk,” said Alice Bender, MS, RDN, AICR’s Director of Nutrition Programs.
- “Whether you start by walking 10 minutes each day and increase a few minutes each week, or by adding a colorful vegetable to your plate each day, each positive change adds to reducing your cancer risk.”

As diagnosis and treatment for breast cancer has improved, more women are surviving their diagnosis – and/or becoming cancer-free. The 5-year survival rate for breast cancer is over 90% and over 3 million women are living with and beyond breast cancer in the US.

“Breast cancer is very common but both detection and treatment have improved dramatically in recent years. But because it is so common, lifestyle factors that reduce risk can have a big impact on the burden of disease. AICR’s cancer prevention recommendations are a blueprint for making that impact,” said Dr. Nigel Brockton, AICR Director of Research.

Recommendations for survivors

AICR recommends that cancer survivors follow recommendations for diet and physical activity when and if they are able to do so. The evidence is persuasive that healthy eating and being active help improve outcomes after a diagnosis of breast cancer. Healthy lifestyle can also reduce the risk of other chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease.

AICR offers tools to help individuals learn about and reduce their cancer risk, including Cancer Health Check (cancerhealthcheck.org) and AICR’s New American Plate Challenge (napchallenge.org).

The American Institute for Cancer Research champions the latest and most authoritative scientific research from around the world on cancer prevention and survival through diet, weight and physical activity, so that it can help people make informed lifestyle choices to reduce their cancer risk. AICR has contributed over $107 million for innovative research conducted at universities, hospitals and research centers across the country. Find evidence-based tools and information for lowering cancer risk, including AICR’s Recommendation for Cancer Prevention, at aicr.org.
Grant funded health systems will address the full continuum of cancer care including breast cancer screening, follow-up of abnormal mammograms, and timely access to specialty care if needed. The grants are the latest in ACS's Community Health Advocates implementing Nationwide Grants for Empowerment and Equity (CHANGE) program, which provides funding opportunities as part of the ACS's commitment to reduce disparities in cancer mortality. Each clinic will receive $100,000 over two years. The grants target underserved populations, with a particular focus on African American communities.

Breast cancer mortality has steadily declined over the last four decades, largely due to improvements in early detection and treatment. However, not all women have benefited equally from this progress. A faster drop among white women has widened the mortality gap between white and black women. Despite similar rates of disease and screening rates, breast cancer death rates in 2015 were 39 percent higher for black women than white women in the nation as a whole and up to 60 percent higher in some states. Access to timely follow-up and high-quality treatment are key drivers of these disparities, especially in underserved communities. Differences in stage of cancer diagnosis, tumor characteristics, obesity, and other comorbidities are also contributing factors.

"Too many women in underserved communities lack access to high-quality breast cancer screening and timely follow-up care," says Richard Wender, M.D., chief cancer control officer, American Cancer Society. "Cancer is a disease that can affect anyone, but it doesn't affect everyone equally. These grants will get us one step closer to reducing disparities and promoting health equity in various communities across the U.S."

"We're encouraged by the impact of our partnership with the American Cancer Society to drive cancer prevention and early detection and pleased to provide these grants that will further the live-saving mission of the Crucial Catch campaign," said Anna Isaacson, NFL senior vice president of social responsibility. "We're committed to the fight against cancer and supporting those affected within the NFL family and well beyond."

Since 2009, the NFL's Crucial Catch has raised more than $18 million in support of ACS. Funding raised since 2012 has supported ACS's CHANGE program and has been invested in underserved communities to increase cancer education and awareness and promote life-saving screening tests. To date, health system grantees have reached more than 632,000 individuals with education, patient reminders and navigation to screening, and contributed to 130,000 breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screenings. These new grants will improve timely access to follow up care along with a continued focus on access to high-quality breast cancer screening for underserved women.
We’re all about the big picture.

Working together, our doctors don’t just see you. They see the big picture of your overall health. By collaborating and seamlessly sharing your records, your care team stays on the same page, so your health always takes center stage. Visit kp.org/panoramacity today because together we thrive.