

The Komen Maryland Affiliate Nursing Partnership

Advancing Education and Practice

Breast Cancer - Know the Key Facts!

- Excluding cancers of the skin, breast cancer is the most common cancer among women, accounting for nearly 1 in 3 cancers diagnosed in US women.
- Breast cancer incidence and death rates generally increase with age.
- The median age at the time of breast cancer diagnosis is 61.
- One in eight women will develop breast cancer over her lifetime.
- The death rate from breast cancer in women has decreased since 1990 because of improvements in early detection and the treatment of breast cancer.

Who Gets Breast Cancer?

Any woman can get breast cancer, but the older the woman, the more likely she is to get breast cancer.

While the incidence rate is lower for African Americans than Whites, the mortality rate is higher. Women of other racial and ethnic groups have lower incidence and mortality rates.

African American women are less likely to be diagnosed with smaller tumors and more likely to be diagnosed with larger tumors than White women.

Known risk factors include being a woman, getting older, having a personal history of breast cancer or ovarian cancer, having the first menstrual period before age 12, starting menopause after age 55, never having children or having the first child after age 30, being overweight, drinking alcohol, or carrying a mutation in the BRCA1 or BRCA2 breast cancer genes.

Only about 5 to 10 percent of all breast cancers occur because of inherited mutations in the BRCA1 or BRCA2 genes.

What are the Recommendations for Early Detection?

There is no guaranteed way to prevent breast cancer, which is why regular mammograms are so important.

Women should have a mammogram performed each year beginning at age 40. Women under 40 who have breast cancer in their family or are worried about their breasts should talk to their doctor.

Early stage breast cancer typically produces no symptoms when the tumor is small and most curable.

All women should become familiar with both the appearance and feel of their breasts. Breast self-exam is recommended once a month, at the same time each month.

For average-risk asymptomatic women in their 20's and 30's, a clinical breast exam should be a part of their regular health examination.

Where Can I Get More Information?

The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation fights to eradicate breast cancer by advancing research, education, screening and treatment. If you or someone you love is diagnosed with breast cancer, call 1.800.IM.AWARE or log-on to www.komen.org. For local resources and information, call the Maryland Affiliate at 410.938.8990 or log-on to www.komenmd.org.

The American Cancer Society provides breast cancer information and resources; the Reach to Recovery program has trained breast cancer volunteers who visit newly diagnosed post-surgical patients. For more information, call 1.800.ACS.2345 or log-on to www.cancer.org.



The Susan G. Komen
Breast Cancer Foundation
Maryland Affiliate



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
SCHOOL OF NURSING