



PAN-AFRICAN
MANAGED CARE



Pink for October

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

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October 2023

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

The incidence of breast cancer among South African women is increasing and it is one of the most common cancers among women in South Africa. Although it predominantly affects woman, it can also affect men. The early detection of breast cancer is one of the most important undertakings to successfully treat the disease.

FACTS ABOUT BREAST CANCER

Early detection of the condition can lead to effective treatment and a positive prognosis. About 90% of patients survive for many years after diagnosis when breast cancer is detected at the early stages.

Presenting yourself early for treatment may result in more effective treatment, leading to a reduction in pain and suffering and a significant decrease in the loss of life.

Regular self-breast examination and regular mammograms are key to early detection.

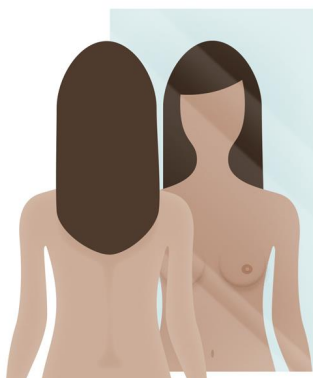
HOW SHOULD A BREAST SELF-EXAM BE PERFORMED?



In the Shower

With the pads/flats of your three middle fingers, check the entire breast and armpit area, pressing down with light, medium, and firm pressure.

Check both breasts each month, feeling for any new lumps, thickenings, hardened knots, or any other breast changes.



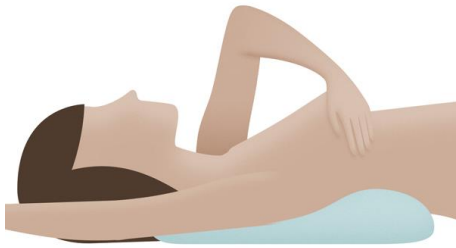
In Front of a Mirror

With your arms at your sides, visually inspect your breasts, looking for any changes in the contour or shape of the breasts, any dimpling, swelling, or other skin irregularities on or around the breasts, or any changes in the nipples.

Next, rest your palms on your hips and press firmly to flex your chest muscles. Look for any dimpling, puckering, or other changes, particularly on one side. Note that the left and right breasts will not exactly match - few women's breasts are perfectly symmetrical.

Lying Down

When lying down, the breast tissue spreads out evenly along the chest wall.



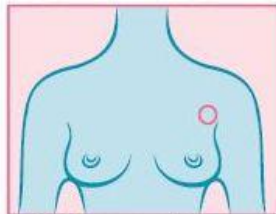
Place a pillow under your right shoulder and put your right arm behind your head. Using your left hand, move the pads of your three middle fingers around your right breast, covering the entire breast area and armpit.

Use light, medium, and firm pressure to feel for any new lumps, thickenings, hardened knots, or any other breast changes. Also squeeze the nipple to check for discharge. Repeat these steps for your left breast.

WARNING SIGNS BREAST CANCER



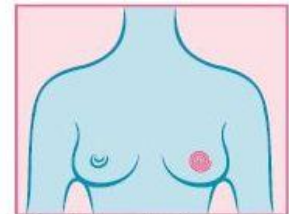
A puckering of the skin of the breast



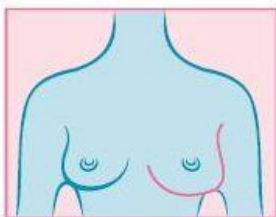
A lump in the breast or armpit



A change in the skin around the nipple or nipple discharge



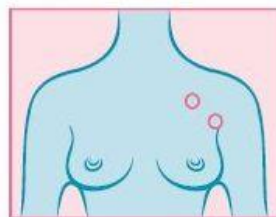
Dimpling of the nipple or nipple retraction



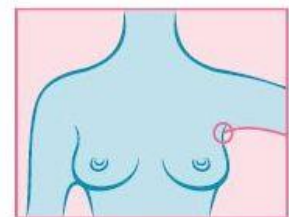
An unusual increase in the size of one breast



One breast unusually lower than the other. Nipples at different levels



An enlargement of the glands



An unusual swelling in the armpit

BREAST CANCER MYTHS

- Myth 1: A breast injury can cause breast cancer.
Injuries to the breast do not cause cancer. Occasionally, a breast cancer diagnosis may follow.
- Myth 2: Breast cancer is more common in women with bigger breasts.
There is no connection between breast size and cancer risk, although it can sometimes be.
- Myth 3: Breast cancer only affects middle-aged or older women.
While most cases of breast cancer do occur in middle-aged or older women, a breast cancer diagnosis can happen at any age or any time.
- Myth 4: Breast pain is a definite sign of breast cancer.
Interestingly, breast pain is usually not a sign of breast cancer.
- Myth 5: Consuming sugar causes breast cancer.
While sugar is not known for its health benefits, it does not cause breast cancer.
- Myth 6: Carrying a phone in your bra can cause breast cancer.
While carrying your cell phone in your bra may not be the most comfortable choice, it does not cause breast cancer.
- Myth 7: All breast cancers are the same.
There are many distinct types of breast cancer which are determined by the specific cells in the breast that become cancer and each type has distinctive features and considerations.
- Myth 8: Bras with underwire can cause breast cancer.
No matter what the type, bras do not cause cancer.
- Myth 9: Finding a lump in your breast means you have breast cancer.
Only a small percentage of breast lumps turn out to be cancer.
- Myth 10: Men do not get breast cancer; it affects women only.
Quite the contrary, each year it is estimated that 2 190 men will be diagnosed with breast cancer.
- Myth 11: A mammogram can cause breast cancer or spread it.
A mammogram, or x-ray of the breast, currently remains the gold standard for the early detection.

Myth 12: If you have a family history of breast cancer, you are likely to develop breast cancer, too.

While women who have a family history of breast cancer are in a higher risk group, most women who have breast cancer have no family history. Statistically only about 10% of individuals diagnosed with breast cancer have a family history of this disease.

Myth 13: Breast cancer is contagious.

You cannot catch breast cancer or transfer it to someone else's body.

REFERENCES

1. <https://www.nationalbreastcancer.org/> (<https://www.nationalbreastcancer.org/>)
2. <https://cansa.org.za/>

