

Breast Cancer *Myths*

Fact vs Fiction



Drinking milk (or dairy) causes breast cancer.

The Truth:

Several myths persist about the correlation between dairy intake and the increased risk of breast cancer. Over many decades, studies have shown that dairy consumption does not increase the risk of breast cancer.



Finding a lump in your breast means you have breast cancer.

The Truth:

Only a small percentage of breast lumps turn out to be cancer. But if you discover a persistent lump in your breast or notice any changes in breast tissue, it should never be ignored. It is very important that you see a physician for a clinical breast exam—they can determine if this lump is of concern or not.



Men do not get breast cancer; it affects women only.

The Truth:

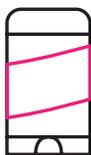
Quite the contrary, each year it is estimated that approximately 2,190 men will be diagnosed with breast cancer and 410 will die. While this percentage is still small, men should also check themselves periodically by doing a breast self-exam while in the shower and reporting any changes to their physicians.



A mammogram can cause breast cancer to spread.

The Truth:

A mammogram, or x-ray of the breast, currently remains the gold standard for the early detection of breast cancer. According to the National Cancer Institute, Breast compression while getting a mammogram cannot cause cancer to spread.



Antiperspirants and deodorants cause breast cancer.

The Truth:

Researchers at the National Cancer Institute (NCI) are not aware of any conclusive evidence linking the use of underarm antiperspirants or deodorants and the subsequent development of breast cancer.



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

The Truth:

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.

Material courtesy of the National Cancer Institute.

Breast Cancer FAQs

Can physical activity reduce the risk of breast cancer?

Exercise boosts the immune system and helps you to keep your weight in check. With as little as three hours of mild exercise per week, or about 30 minutes a day, a woman can begin to lower her risk of breast cancer.

Can a healthy diet help to prevent breast cancer?

A nutritious, low-fat diet (30 grams or less) with plenty of fruits and green and orange vegetables can help reduce the risk of developing breast cancer. A high-fat diet increases the risk because fat triggers estrogen production that can fuel tumor growth.

Does smoking cause breast cancer?

Smoking is a confirmed risk factor for many types of cancer. Recent research (2012) has confirmed that smoking is a contributing risk factor for developing breast cancer. Additionally, second hand smoke is also a risk factor for cancer. Smoking also directly contributes to heart and other lung diseases, too.

Are mammograms painful?

Mammography does compress the breasts and can sometimes cause slight discomfort for a very brief period of time. Your doctor may say it is fine to take acetaminophen an hour before the x-ray is performed to prevent discomfort too.

What kind of impact does stress have on breast cancer?

In 2012, some research studies have shown that factors such as traumatic events and losses can alter immune system functions, and when immune functions are altered cancer cells may have an opportunity to get themselves established within one's body. Identifying ways to keep your stress level in check is wise.

Time for Your Mammogram?

Mammograms are the best way to find breast cancer early, when it is most treatable. While it is recommended that women begin getting mammograms at age 40, the age to stop mammograms is less clear. Older women with other serious medical issues should discuss the benefits of mammography with their physician.

If you are healthy, you should continue to get a mammogram every one to two years. If you aren't sure when to schedule your next mammogram, talk to your doctor. As a Care N' Care member, routine mammograms are covered with no out of pocket costs.

Breast Self-Exam (BSE)

Women should should select the same day of the month (first of the month for example) and mark it on the calendar to remind herself when to perform this self-exam. What to look for is a change from last month's exam to this month's exam. It is not unusual to have lumpy or bumpy breasts.

All women should know the geography of their own breasts. If having trouble remembering, draw a diagram of where the lumps, bumps, grooves, and other findings are felt so that this can be used as a reminder from month to month. There is no added value in doing breast self-exams more often than monthly.