

Breast Cancer - most prevalent cancer in women

DR. RAMPRASAD

THE most common form of cancer affecting women across the globe is Breast Cancer. In India, out of every two women diagnosed with breast cancer one dies of it. Breast cancer is more aggressive in younger woman especially in the age group of 30-40 than the rest. Also, there is an increase in number of breast cancer cases reported which is approximately 1 in every 22 women.

Cancer that develops from breast cells or tissues is known as Breast Cancer. Everyone irrespective of the gender is born with breast cells/tissues which may possibly turn into cancer.

Though the exact cause of breast cancer is unknown, there are certain factors which increase its risk.

Risk factors

- Age: As you grow older chances of developing breast cancer increases
- Family History: Any close relative being diagnosed with breast cancer
- Previous history of breast cancer: If you had breast cancer before
- Obesity and Drinking alcohol: Being overweight and having alcohol regularly increases the risk
- Breast lumps and tissues: Certain non-cancerous lumps and dense tissues can turn cancerous

Most women diagnosed with breast cancer do not have a family history but some do develop the disease because of their genetic makeup. Everyone inherits genes from their parents hence a pair, one from each parent. At times there can be a fault (mutation) because of which the gene does not function properly. Men and women with such gene changes are not only at a higher risk of breast cancer but also other types of cancer. BRCA1 and BRCA 2 are the most common breast can-

cer genes and families with abnormal of these genes have higher possibility of developing breast cancer.

Symptoms

Women should examine their breasts regularly; and in case of any of the following symptoms should consult a doctor immediately: lump in the breast or armpit, bloody nipple discharge, inverted nipple, orange-peel texture or dimpling of the breast's skin,

breast pain or sore nipple, change in the size or shape of the breast or nipple.

Diagnosis

Once the patient consults a doctor with such symptoms doctors do the following for confirmation.

- Breast Examination: Doctor will check for abnormalities and lumps
- Mammogram: It is a breast X-ray that helps the doctor understand the problem area
- MRI: A breast MRI clearly details the extent of cancer
- Biopsy: A sample of tissue of lump/abnormality post-surgical removal is set for analysis

Treatment

Depending on the type and stage, breast cancer is treated in two different ways: Local treatment (Surgery and Radiation Therapy) and Systemic treatments (Chemotherapy, Hormone therapy, Targeted therapy). Duration of treatment is based on the stage and type of disease and also it relies on patient's resistance level and strong mental condition. Doctors are also categorized as Breast Surgeon (who treat breast cancer), Radiation oncologist (uses radiation to treat cancer) and Medical oncologist (uses chemotherapy and other medicines to treat cancer) on basis of the treatment they provide.

The author is the COO of MEDGENOME

