

## 5.2: Breast Cancer

### Risk Factors

- Early onset of menstrual period.
- Late menopause.
- Late age at first child birth.
- Alcohol and tobacco use.
- Family history.
- Being overweight.
- Lack of physical activity.
- Shorter duration or no breastfeeding.

### Common Signs and Symptoms of Breast Cancer

- A change in size of the breasts.
- A nipple that is pulled in or changed in position or shape.
- A rash on or around the nipple.
- Discharge from one or both nipples.
- Puckering or dimpling of skin of the breasts.
- Lump or thickening in the breast.
- Constant pain in the breast or armpit.

Women over 30 years should be screened by a trained provider, at least once in five years. Those who have a family history of breast cancer should be encouraged to get screened more often.

Screening for breast cancer can be done by a trained health worker such as an ANM at the sub centre. This is called Clinical Breast examination. Any of the signs above should be considered suspicious and the woman should be referred to a medical officer.

### What is Breast Self-Examination (BSE)

Breast self-examination is recommended to raise awareness of breast cancer. The practice of BSE empowers women to take responsibility for their health. However this is **not a substitute for examination by a trained provider**.

#### Best time to undertake BSE:

- 7-10 days after the first day of the menstrual period.
- If not menstruating, pick a certain day - such as the first day of each month.
- If taking hormones, then do it 1-2 days after withdrawal bleeding.