

Title:

Breast Cancer: What Women Should Know

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590

Summary:

From relative obscurity, breast cancer has become one of the leading causes of deaths among women in the world. In 2001, about 200,000 cases of breast cancer have been reported in the United States, making it the second leading cause of cancer death in the US. It is, in fact, the most common malignancy problem that is affecting women in North America and Europe today.

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Article Body:

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But what is breast cancer and how do people get it?

Breast cancer occurs when malignant tumors in the breast grow and start to affect other tissues in the body. There is still no clear indications how tumors are created but what is often observed is that cancerous cells usually comes from ducts or glands.

Although women's health organizations advise women to massage the breast daily and to feel for any lumps, it may a long time before a cancerous cell get big enough for us to feel it. By that time, it may already be too late. Doctors make use of mammograms for their diagnosis.

Breast at risk

All women are actually at risk, with the risk increasing with the presence of

some risk factors that are already part of the natural cycle, for example, aging. Family history of breast cancer can also significantly affect the prognosis as heredity has been found to play a role. Women who got their periods before they were 12 years old and those who never had or had children after 30 years old are also more likely to develop breast cancer.

There are also risk factors that medical science can help alter such as hormonal problems through replacement therapies. Women are also advised to decrease their consumption of alcoholic drinks, exercise every day and decrease the use of birth control pills. Breastfeeding has been found to decrease the risk of breast cancer development.

Although there are some factors that women can avoid to prevent breast cancer from developing, cause and effect relationships between these factors and breast cancer is still debatable. For women who are already at high risk, doctors often recommend a drug called Tamoxifen, which is known to decrease the risk by as much 50 percent when taken in five years. Still, like all medications, Tamoxifen has side effects such as hot flushes, vaginal discharges and sometimes even blood clots. Taking the drug can also lead to pulmonary embolus, stroke and uterine cancer, although these are all isolated cases.

Another avenue that women can go to is Vitamin A, which some studies show to be effective in decreasing the risk. Still, research is still in the initial stages and nothing has been proven yet. Other things that are being linked to the breast cancer fight are phytoestrogens, which can be found in soya, Vitamin E, and Vitamin C.

But until something concrete is found in research, the only thing that women can do to ensure that they are safe from breast cancer is early detection. This can be done through daily self-examinations as well as annual check ups and mammogram tests. It is also important that women know the beginnings of breast cancer. Here are some of the signs that they should watch out for.

Lumps in the breast and in the underarms
Scaling of the skin of the breast and of the nipple
Redness in the skin of the breast and of the nipple
Changes in the size of their breasts
Discharges from the nipple

If these signs are observed, it is best to consult a specialist so that you can know whether you have breast cancer or not.