

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

As many of you know, October is Breast Cancer Awareness month. During October, we see lots of pink ribbons, events to raise awareness, and stories of survivors. Each year in the United States, about 264,000 cases of breast cancer are diagnosed in women and about 2,400 cases in men. In this article we are going to talk about breast cancer, what causes it, and how you can protect yourself by catching it early.

Breast cancer can best be defined as a disease in which the cells in the breast grow out of control. There are different kinds of breast cancer that are dependent upon the cells that turn cancerous. There are three different areas that make up a breast: lobules, ducts, and connective tissue. Most breast cancers begin in the ducts or lobules. Even though it begins in the breast, it can spread through blood vessels and lymph vessels to other parts of the body. As mentioned earlier, there are different types of breast cancer, with the most common being invasive ductal carcinoma and invasive lobular carcinoma.

So, what are some of the warning signs of breast cancer? Warning signs can include; new lumps in the breast or underarm, swelling of part of the breast, irritation of breast skin, redness or pain in the nipple area, discharge other than milk, any change in the size or shape of the breast, or pain in any area. While having some of these symptoms doesn't necessarily mean you have cancer, you should still be seen by a doctor.

Now that we've discussed what breast cancer is and what the warning signs are, let's talk about risk factors. Studies suggest that your risk for breast cancer depends on a combination of factors. The main two factors are being a woman and getting older as most breast cancers are found in women over the age of 50. Some other risk factors include genetic mutations of certain genes, a family history of breast or ovarian cancer, and having dense breasts.

We have talked about warning signs and risk factors. Now let's talk about screenings. Breast cancer screening are done to check a woman's breasts for cancer before any signs or symptoms occur. The main way this is done is through a mammogram. Mammograms are recommended for women at average risk of breast cancer from age 50 to 74 years. This should be done every two years. Women aged 40 to 49 should talk with their doctor about when to start and how often to get mammograms. To help people navigate cancer screenings, the Ohio Department of Health has a Breast and Cervical Cancer Project (BCCP). For more information or to see if you qualify for no-cost screenings, call 1-844-430-BCCP (2227)

For more information on breast cancer, please visit [CDC.gov/cancer/breast/](https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/)



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