



OCTOBER 2020

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. **There are more than 3.5 million women in the U.S. with a history of breast cancer.** It's estimated that about 30% of newly diagnosed cancers in women will be breast cancers. **About 85% of breast cancers occur in women who have no family history of breast cancer.**

These occur due to genetic mutations that happen as a result of the aging process and life in general, rather than inherited mutations.

Women in the U.S. have a 1 in 8 lifetime risk of being diagnosed with breast cancer. Every 2 minutes, one case of breast cancer is diagnosed in a woman in the U.S. This year, more than 260,000 new cases of invasive breast cancer are expected to

be diagnosed in women and more than 2,500 cases in men. **More than 41,000 women and men are expected to die from breast cancer.** There have been improvements in early detection and treatment which has led to a **39% decline in breast cancer deaths between 1989-2019.** One of the best early detection breast cancer screening options is a mammogram. Women ages 40 to 44 should have the choice to start annual breast cancer screening if they wish to do so. **Women age 45 to 54 should get mammograms every year.** Women 55 and older may switch to mammograms every 2 years or can continue yearly screening. **Women under 40 with a family history of breast cancer or a genetic marker for breast cancer should talk to their doctor for guidance.**



REDUCING YOUR RISK



CONTROL YOUR WEIGHT

Being overweight or obese increases the risk of breast cancer. This is especially true if obesity occurs later in life, particularly after menopause.



BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

Aim for at least 150 minutes a week of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity weekly.



LIMIT ALCOHOL

The more alcohol you drink, the greater your risk. Limit yourself to less than one drink a day, as even small amounts increase risk.

BREAST CANCER HAIR LOSS



Each person is different. Ask your health care team if hair loss is likely to happen. If it is, ask if it will happen quickly or gradually.

If the thought of losing your hair bothers you, you might choose to cut your hair very short or even shave your head before it starts falling out.

If you think you might want a wig, buy it before treatment begins or at the very start of treatment. Ask if the wig can be adjusted – you might need a smaller wig as you lose hair. Get a list of wig shops in your area from your cancer team or other patients. You can also order the Tender Loving Care® catalog or call 1-800-850-9445.

Some people find wigs are hot or itchy, and use turbans or scarves instead. Cotton fabrics tend to stay on a smooth scalp better than nylon or polyester.

If your hair becomes very thin or is completely gone, protect the skin on your scalp from heat, cold, and the sun. Use a sunscreen (SPF) 30+ and a hat. In cold weather, wear a hat or scarf.



TELLING OTHERS ABOUT YOUR CANCER

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT IT?

You will have many different emotions as you learn more about your diagnosis and begin to learn about treatment options. It's normal to wonder, "Why me?" or to feel sad, angry, or afraid. Physical and chemical changes from the treatment or the cancer itself can also affect your emotions. The first step is to admit to yourself how you feel. It's OK to let yourself feel the way you do.

GETTING READY TO TALK TO OTHERS

Only you can decide when to tell your friends and family you have cancer. It may be even more important for single people without supportive family members nearby to let close friends know what's happening. Think ahead so you can tell them what they can do when they ask how they can help – people who live alone often have a few extra needs compared to those who live with others.

DECIDING WHO TO TELL

Start by making a list of people that you want to talk to. People usually tell their spouse or partner first, then other family and close friends. It's also important to tell your children, which might require more preparation depending on their ages. Learn more in [Helping Children When a Family Member Has Cancer: Dealing With Diagnosis](#).

HOW TO TALK TO OTHERS ABOUT YOUR CANCER

Tell the people close to you how you're feeling. This is sometimes hard to do, but it's healthy to let others know about your sadness, anxiety, anger, or other emotional distress. If you don't feel comfortable doing this, you may want to find a support group or a mental health counselor to help you. Some people prefer workshops, peer groups, or religious support.

