Health Bytes

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Breast Cancer Awareness

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among South African women. Do you know that men get it too? Even though breast cancer is not typically associated with men, male breast cancer can occur in rare instances at any age, although it is more common in older men.

It is important to do monthly self examinations. It is easy, just follow the steps below:

1. The breast starts from the collarbone, down to your abdominal wall and from your breastbone to mid-way through your side.
2. You can do the examinations while standing or lying down.
3. Examine on the breastbone as well.
4. It is best to do a breast self-exam a few days after the end of your monthly menstrual cycle.

Stand in front of the mirror and look at your breasts. Lift your arms above your head as though trying to reach the ceiling and look at your breasts in a stretched position.

1. Check to see that there are no obvious changes between the two sides; no nipple changes or visible lumps.
2. Now feel your breasts. Use the flat surface of your fingers.
3. Always keep your hand flat on your breast.
4. Apply cream, shower gel, soap or oil to your breasts before starting to feel. This will help your hand glide easily over your skin and make it easier to feel for any lumps.
5. Put one hand on your head. The free hand will check the opposite breast.
6. Now move in the figure of a six and around the entire breast, until you reach the nipple.
7. Go back to the armpit, moving from top to bottom of the breast, covering the whole area once again.
8. Lastly, move from the armpit in a side to side direction, again covering the whole breast.
9. Also check if there is a discharge from the nipple. To do this, gently squeeze the nipple to see if any fluid comes through. The only time there should be something coming out of the nipple is when you are breastfeeding. If the fluid is yellow or green it shows infection.
10. If it is clear or bloodstained go straight to the doctor for a check-up.

Signs of a more serious condition (such as breast cancer) include discharge that:
- Occurs without squeezing the nipple
- Occurs in only one breast
- Is bloody or clear (not milky)
- Nipple discharge can also be caused by an infection or other condition that needs treatment.

Having one or more of these symptoms doesn’t necessarily mean you have breast cancer. Nipple discharge, for example, can also be caused by an infection. See your doctor for a complete evaluation if you experience any of these signs and symptoms.

1. A lump in the breast or arm pit, sizes vary from a marble to a tennis ball (all lumps should be investigated by a healthcare professional, but not all lumps are cancerous);
2. Increase in size of one breast;
3. Swelling of glands in an armpit;
4. Enlargement of one arm;
5. Dimpling of the skin, anywhere on the breast;
6. Lowering of one breast or nipple;
7. A change in the skin texture or an enlargement of pores in the skin of the breast (some describe this as similar to an orange peel's texture);
8. Skin of the breast, areola, or nipple that becomes scaly, red, or swollen or may have ridges or pitting resembling orange peal;
9. Uneexplained swelling of the breast (especially if on one side only);
10. Uneexplained shrinkage of the breast (especially if on one side only);
11. Recent asymmetry of the breasts (Although it is common for women to have one breast that is slightly larger than the other, if the onset of a asymmetry is recent, it should be checked);
12. A change in how the breast or nipple feels;
13. A change in the breast or nipple appearance;
14. Dimpling of, or changes to the nipple;
15. Any nipple discharge - particularly clear discharge or bloody discharge;
16. It is also important to note that a milky discharge that is present when a woman is not breastfeeding should be checked by her doctor, although it is not linked with breast cancer;
17. Dry skin (eczema) of the nipple;
18. Nipple tenderness or a lump or thickening in or near the breast or underarm area;
19. Nipple that is turned slightly inward or inverted (retraction).
Breast cancer in men

Men have breast tissue too, and those cells can undergo cancerous changes. Since male breast cells are much less developed than women’s breast cells, breast cancer in men is not as common as it tends to occur at a later age than in women (the male peak age being 71 years as opposed to peak ages of 51 and 71 years in women).

Breast cancer in men is usually detected as a hard lump underneath the nipple and areola. Studies suggest that for every male diagnosed, approximately 100 females are diagnosed with breast cancer.

- Diagnosis of breast cancer in men is generally delayed 6 - 10 months (the time from the onset of symptoms until the patient seeks treatment). This delay is partially due to:
  - The rarity of the disease and
  - A lack of awareness of (and suspicion of) the disease by patients and their doctors.
- Because of this delay, men present with the disease at a later stage than women do.
- Since there are multiple causes of male breast lumps (most of which are benign), it is important that both physicians and patients have a clear understanding of the significance of lumps or new symptoms, such as nipple discharge or pain in the male breast.
- Diagnosis of breast cancer in males is almost exclusively centered on the evaluation of lumps in the breast.
- When symptoms are present, doctors generally use the Triple Test (TT) method to determine stage and treatment plan. The TT is the use of clinical exam, mammography or ultrasound, and or core needle biopsy.
- Male breast tissue is mostly fat and the lobules needed to form milk are undeveloped.
- Over 90% of male breast tumours are invasive (infiltrating) ductal carcinoma and ER positive.
- Because of the rarity of male breast cancer, routine screening mammograms are not recommended for males at any age.
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Recovery and exercises

The treatment for women with breast cancer often include surgery. It could be simple and once off like a biopsy, or major surgery to remove or reconstruct a breast. If such surgery is followed by radiation therapy it could have long term effects on the muscle and skin.

- All treatment, and especially surgery on the chest wall, will affect breathing and how well the arm and shoulder move.
- Many of the daily activities of living (such as bathing, combing hair, dressing and eating) need the use of the arm and shoulder.
- We need to breathe effectively to survive.
- Swelling, pain and stiffness in the chest and upper limb impairs the ability to live independently.
- It is essential to keep the joints flexible and get into the habit of doing regular exercises to support arm and shoulder mobility.
- These exercises will vary depending on where you are in your treatment and some movements should wait until drains and sutures are removed.
- It is important to talk to the doctor and physiotherapist about a program that is right for you.

The vast majority of diagnosed male breast cancer cases are Infiltrating Ductal Carcinoma (IDC), which is when cells in or around the ducts begin to invade the surrounding tissue. It is very rare for male breast cancer to be inflammatory breast cancer, or Paget disease, of the nipple.

MALE BREAST CANCER RISK FACTORS

- Inhaling or high use
- Inhaling or high use
- IRRITATING DUCTS
- IRRITATING DUCTS
- EATING
- EATING
- DRINKING
- DRINKING
- SMOKING
- SMOKING
- IRRITATING
- IRRITATING
- BREAST CARCINOMA
- BREAST CARCINOMA
- AGING
- AGING
- HEMODYNAMIC
- HEMODYNAMIC
- EXCESS BODY WEIGHT
- EXCESS BODY WEIGHT

1 in 8 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime.

MAKE OCTOBER YOUR MONTH TO GET SCREENED BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

It is normal to feel tightness in the chest and arm pit. This tightness should decrease as you do the exercises.
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To reduce swelling & improve lymph drainage

- Immediately after surgery rest the arm on pillows to support a slight incline where the hand is higher than the wrist, the wrist higher than the elbow and the elbow higher than the shoulder – the shoulder should be the lowest point to reduce swelling.
- Open and close the hand 10–25 times, 4–6 times per day. Bend and straighten the elbow 3–4 times per day.
- Try not to let the arm hang down for long periods of time – rest it on an armrest, fold it across your chest or if you are walking a fair distance alternate swinging the arm, clenching the fingers and walking with folded arms.
- Start with movements to increase mobility and add strength exercises later.
- Practice deep breathing exercises: Lie on the back, place one hand on the abdomen, try to expand the chest and abdomen by breathing in as much as you can and checking to see how far you can push the hand up with the abdominal wall. Relax and breathe out. Repeat for 4–5 breaths, 6 times per day.

You can download an app such as Breast Cancer Ally to help you keep track.

Shoulders and chest exercises

This exercise helps increase your ability to move your shoulders forward.
You will need a broom handle or other stick-like object to use as the wand. Do these exercises on a bed or the floor.
- Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat.
- Hold the wand across your belly in both hands with your palms facing up.
- Lift the wand up over your head as far as you can. Use your unaffected arm to help lift the wand until you feel a stretch in your affected arm.
- Hold for 5 seconds.
- Lower arms and repeat 5 to 7 times.

This exercise helps stretch your chest.
- Stand facing a corner with your toes about 8 to 10 inches from the corner.
- Bend your elbows and put your forearms on the wall, one on each side of the corner. Your elbows should be close to shoulder height as possible.
- Keep your arms and feet in place and move your chest toward the corner. You will feel a stretch across your chest and shoulders.
- Return to the starting position and repeat 5 to 7 times.
- The picture shows stretching both sides at the same time, but you may find it more comfortable to stretch one arm at a time.
- Be sure you keep your shoulders dropped far away from your ears as you do this stretch.

This exercise helps increase your mobility in your shoulder:
- Stand facing the wall with your toes about 8 to 10 inches from the wall.
- Put your hands on the wall. Use your fingers to "climb the wall," reaching as high as you can until you feel a stretch.
- Return to the starting position and repeat 5 to 7 times.
- The picture shows both arms going up at the same time, but you might find it easier to raise one arm at a time.
- Be sure you keep your shoulders dropped far away from your ears as you raise your arms.

More shoulders and chest exercises

This exercise helps increase the movement in the front of your chest and shoulder.
It may take many weeks of regular exercise before your elbows will get close to the bed or floor.
- Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat.
- Clasp your hands behind your neck with your elbows pointing toward the ceiling.
- Move your elbows apart and down toward the bed or floor.
- Repeat 5 to 7 times.

- Sit in a chair very close to a table with your back against the back of the chair.
- Place the unaffected arm on the table with your elbow bent 90 degrees. Do not move this arm during the exercise.
- Place the affected arm on the table, palm down, with your elbow straight.
- Without moving your trunk, slide the affected arm forward, bend your elbow 30–45 degrees, 15–25 times, 4–6 times per day.
- Keep your arm straight. Bend and straighten the elbow 3–4 times per day.
- Return to the starting position and repeat 5 to 7 times.

- Sit in a chair in front of a mirror. Face straight ahead. Do not rest against the back of the chair.
- Your arms should be at your sides with your elbows bent.
- Squeeze your shoulder blades together, bringing your elbows behind you. Keep your shoulder level as you do this. Do not lift your shoulders up toward your ears.
- Return to the starting position and repeat 5 to 7 times.

- Sit in a chair and clasp your hands together in front of you. Lift your arms slowly over your head, straightening your arms.
- When your arms are over your head, bend your trunk to the right keeping your arms overhead.
- Return to the starting position and bend to the left.
- Repeat 5 to 7 times.

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