

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS FOR PREGNANT AND NEW MOTHERS

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Breast cancer can strike a woman at any stage throughout her life. In the United States, approximately 225,000 women are diagnosed with invasive breast cancer and 63,000 with non-invasive breast cancer each year. Breast cancer occurs in 1 out of every 3,000 pregnancies and 1.5% of women are pregnant when they are diagnosed. Although breast cancer is rare in pregnancy and postpartum women, it does occur, and preventative actions should be taken and warning signs should not be ignored. With early detection and the right treatment, most women diagnosed with breast cancer during pregnancy go on to deliver healthy babies.

The following article contains important information regarding the risk factors associated with breast cancer and ways women can screen and proactively prevent their chances of acquiring the disease.

RISK FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH BREAST CANCER

Being a Woman: Men can be diagnosed with breast cancer, but it is most prevalent in women.

Aging: As women age, their risk for breast cancer increases.

Family History: Carriers of the BRCA 1 and 2 genes are far more likely to be at risk for breast cancer. However, only 10-15% of the likelihood of being diagnosed with breast cancer is linked to family history.

History: Personal history of breast cancer or other cancers increases one's risk.

Ethnicity: Caucasian women are at higher risk for breast cancer than African American women.

Breast Tissue: Women with dense breast tissue have a higher risk for breast cancer.

Chest Radiation Exposure: Prior exposure to chest radiation increases one's risk.



Hormone Changes: Early onset of menstruation and late menopause increases one's risk.

Obesity: Obesity increases one's risk for breast cancer along with other diseases including hypertension, diabetes, and heart disease.

Sedentary or Inactive Life Style: Being active and exercising regularly significantly reduces one's risk of breast cancer.

SCREENING FOR BREAST CANCER

Mammograms have always been the cornerstone of breast cancer screening. While mammograms are important, they are far from perfect and do not detect all breast cancers. Self-breast exams are recommended to aide in the detection of breast cancer. A palpable mass should never be ignored, even in pregnancy and breast-feeding. A palpable breast abnormality is best evaluated by an ultrasound, which is completely safe in pregnancy. In addition, a palpable mass should not be ignored even with a normal mammogram. Additional screening modalities, including MRI, are also used to evaluate palpable masses.

PREVENTION OF BREAST CANCER

Exercise: Being active has shown to decrease the risk of breast, colon, endometrial and lung cancer, in addition to several other diseases including heart disease and diabetes.

Stop Smoking

Breast Feeding

Avoiding Foods with a High Glycemic Index: This includes but is not limited to sugar (white or brown), honey, syrups, white/bleached flour, potatoes, sweetened drinks

Increase Omega-3 Intake: Some foods high in Omega-3 include flaxseed, walnuts, salmon, sardines, soybeans, tofu and halibut.

Eat Grass-fed Organic Animal Products

Vitamin D: The Nurses Health Study found a 30% lower risk of breast cancer in premenopausal women, when comparing the highest to the lowest intake of Vitamin D.



Activated Vitamin D produced in breast tissue, stimulates the production of tumor-suppressor genes.

Increase Your Intake of Anti-Cancer Products:

Green Tea contains a polyphenols called catechins. A type of catechin found in green tea is the most powerful nutritional molecule against the formation of new blood vessels by cancerous cells.

Berries are a major antioxidant source.

Cruciferous Vegetables such as kale, broccoli, and cabbage contain sulforaphanes which stimulates the production of enzymes in the liver that help break down chemicals and excess hormones.

Mushrooms stimulate the immune system.

Turmeric with its active ingredient, curcumin, is a yellow spice; a kitchen staple in India. Curcumin has been studied in depth by Bharat B. Aggarwal, PhD of M.D. Anderson Cancer Center. Turmeric has been shown to fight cancer on many levels. Further information can be found at www.curcuminresearch.org.

Although there is no way to completely prevent one from being diagnosed with breast cancer, knowing the risk factors, performing routine screenings, and taking preventative measures will indeed reduce one's risk. Early detection is very important and warning signs should never be ignored. Be sure to contact your doctor with any questions or concerns.

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