

Breast Cancer

Breast cancer

Cancer develops due to the abnormal development and growth of some of your cells in your body. Breast cancer is a cancer that develops from breast tissue. Breast cancer can present with various physical signs, such as:

- A lump in the breast
- Change in the shape of the breast
- Dimpling of the breast skin
- Discharge from the nipple
- A newly inverted nipple
- A red or scaly patch of skin on the breast
- Signs that the disease have spread to other body parts: bone pain, swollen lymph nodes

Risk factors for developing breast cancer

There are certain risk factors that might contribute to the development of breast cancer (and various other cancers). These include:

- Obesity (and high cholesterol levels) (See page 91-92)
- A lack of physical exercise (See page 89-90)
- Drinking alcohol
- Radiation exposure
- Early age at first menstruation
- Older age
- Family history of breast cancer
- Late pregnancy

Prevention

Breast cancer can mainly be prevented by preventing the risk factors (listed above) through for example following a healthy and active lifestyle and decreasing your alcohol intake. There is however no guarantee that you will not get breast cancer. Another, more radical, prevention measure, known as a mastectomy, is when your breasts are surgically removed. Removal can be followed by breast reconstruction surgery. Mastectomies are usually only performed when a person have an extremely strong family history of breast cancer.



Screening

When you are being screened for breast cancer, tests are done to look for breast cancer, although you have no signs of breast cancer. Screening are very important to detect breast cancer early. When breast cancer are detected earlier, there is a higher chance that it can be removed completely. Screening usually consists out of, among others, a self-examination of your breast and mammogram imaging.

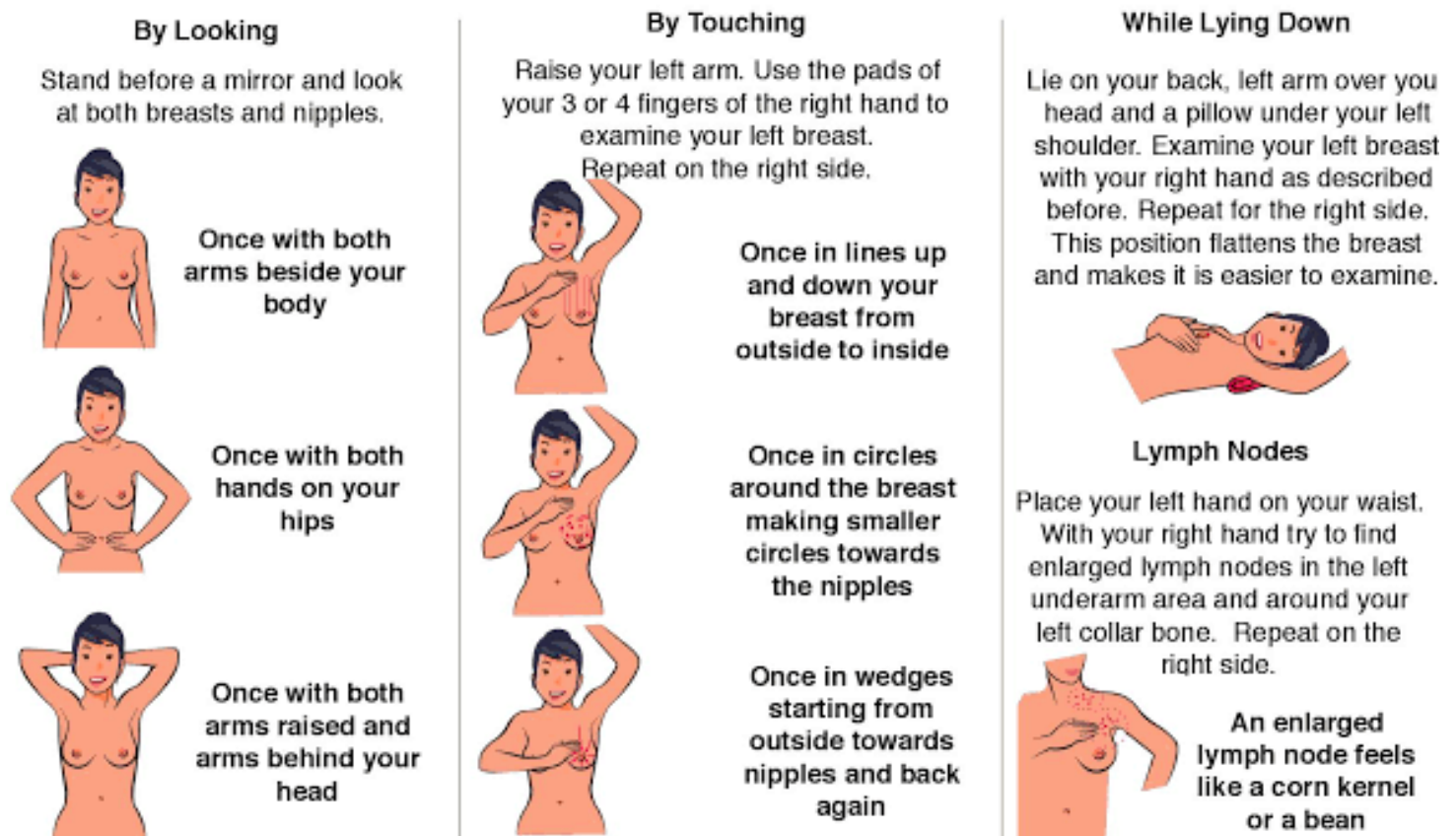
A mammogram is when a X-ray image are taken of your breast to detect cancer. Self-examination is when you feel and inspect your own breasts for the following changes:

- Lumps - Areas that feel different than the surrounding tissue.
- One breast becoming larger or lower than the other
- Skin changes – Rashes, colour changes, dimpling
- Nipple changes – Inverted nipples, nipple changing position or shape
- Discharge
- Pain – Constantly in part of the breast or the armpit
- Swelling – In the armpit or in the area of the breast and just above the breast

When you find any of these breast changes on self-examination, it is essential to see a doctor as soon as possible. Early diagnosis are extremely important when it comes to effective treatment and resolution of breast cancer. These signs can indicate breast cancer or another underlying problem, which your doctor will be able to identify.

How to self-examine your breasts





Diagnosis

The presence of breast cancer are usually confirmed with a biopsy of the breast lump. Once you have been diagnosed with breast cancer, further tests are usually done to see if the cancer has spread to other body parts. The best way to detect breast cancer early is with a mammogram. Women with no family history of breast cancer can consider having their first mammogram between 40 and 50 years of age. It is strongly recommended that women between 50 and 74 years old do have a mammogram every 2 years. Women with a family history of breast cancer should have a mammograms earlier in their lives and in more frequent intervals. This age and interval gap should be discussed with your doctor. Mammograms can be done at most tertiary and some secondary hospitals. Breast cancer that are in a more advanced stage can be detected with self-examination.

Staging

The stage of breast cancer is an indication of it's size and whether it has spread to other areas of your body. The TNM staging are usually used. The higher the stage, the more advanced the breast cancer.



Treatment

Treatment can include surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy and hormonal therapy. A mastectomy, with reconstruction surgery can also be done. The outcomes and treatment of breast cancer, just like most other cancers, depend on various factors, such as the cancer type, whether the disease has spread and the age of the person.

Pink ribbon movement

The pink ribbon is a global symbol of showing support of and raising awareness for breast cancer. Pink ribbons are worn in honour of those who have been diagnosed with breast cancer.

