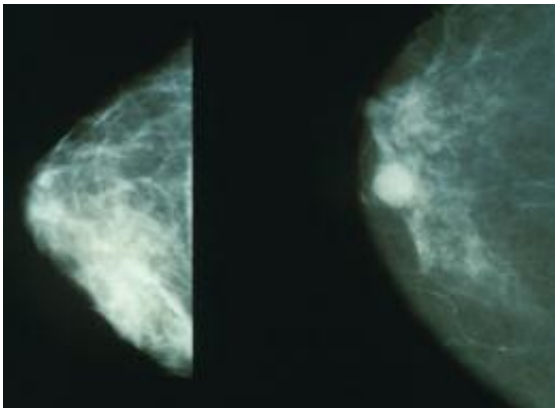


Breast cancer awareness: What women need to know

September 28 2016



Mammograms showing a normal breast (left) and a cancerous breast (right).
Credit: Wikipedia.

As national Breast Cancer Awareness Months begins next week, breast health expert Dr. Sharon Koehler of New York Institute of Technology College of Osteopathic Medicine, says women need to know the following five things:

1. Breast cancer is the second-most common cancer in women (after [skin cancer](#)). It's the most common noncutaneous cancer in U.S. women, with an estimated 61,000 cases of in situ disease, 246,660 cases of [invasive disease](#), and 40,450 deaths expected in 2016.
2. Early detection saves lives.

3. Mammograms are the best screening tool for [breast cancer](#).

4. 85% of women with breast cancer do not die of their disease; in fact, nearly 100% of women diagnosed with stage 0 & 1 have a nearly 100% 5-year survival.

5. Everyone with breast cancer has a tailored treatment designed for them. All breast cancers are NOT treated the same.

Koehler advises women to learn more about screening from the Susan G. Komen organization.

Koehler say there are common myths about breast cancer that must be dispelled to help patients and their families. These include:

1. Every lump in the breast is a cancer.

TRUTH: Nine out of ten masses biopsied are benign (not cancer).

2. I don't have breast cancer because no one in my family has ever been diagnosed with breast cancer.

TRUTH: Eight out of every 10 women diagnosed with breast cancer, do not have a family history of breast cancer.

3. If I get breast cancer, I am likely going to die from the disease.

TRUTH: Approximately 85% of women diagnosed with breast cancer do not die of the disease. Survival is influenced most by stage at diagnosis.

4. Breast cancer is treated by removing my breast.

TRUTH: Removal of the entire breast is one option, but just removing all of the cancer and leaving the healthy breast tissue is often also an option.

5. All women with breast cancer will need chemotherapy.

TRUTH: Chemotherapy is used in some women with breast cancer but not everyone must have chemotherapy. The earlier the stage, the less likely you will need chemotherapy.

6. I don't have cancer, I feel fine.

TRUTH: Breast cancer often has no symptoms and may simply be seen on a mammogram.

Finally, Koehler offers four simple things women can do to improve their breast health:

1. Speak with your doctor about breast cancer screening.
2. Take note of any changes in your breasts such as masses or thickening, skin abnormalities, nipple discharge, enlarged nodes in your arm pit and report them to your doctor.
3. Avoid hormone replacement therapy.
4. Maintain a healthy weight.

Provided by New York Institute of Technology

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