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OCTOBER 2026

PINK

Breast Cancer Awareness Month



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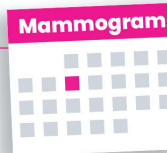
October Is **Breast Cancer Awareness Month**



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Remember Your Mammogram



Women Ages 40 Through 74 at average risk for breast cancer should Get a Mammogram Every Other Year

according to U.S. Preventive
Services Task Force
2024 guidelines.

DID YOU KNOW?



Thanks to early detection and improved therapies, many cases of breast cancer are successfully treated. However, the Susan G. Komen® organization reports breast cancer survival rates vary depending on the stage of the disease at the time of diagnosis. **Those diagnosed as having stages 0, I and II tend to have better survival rates than those whose disease was discovered after the cancer had already advanced to stages III and IV.** Although each situation is unique, the five-year survival rate among those diagnosed with breast cancer stage I or lower is between 98 and 100 percent. Stage II falls between 90 and 99 percent. The five-year survival rate for stage III patients is between 66 and 98 percent. While the organization does not provide survival data for stage IV, according to the National Cancer Institute's Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER), the five-year relative breast cancer survival rates for women with a SEER stage of Distant (the cancer cells have spread to other parts of the body) is 33 percent. If cancer cells have spread beyond the breast but it is limited to nearby lymph nodes (Regional), the survival rate is 87 percent.

The different types of breast cancer

The term “breast cancer” does not describe a single type of cancer, but rather several forms of a disease that can develop in areas of the breast. The American Cancer Society says breast cancer type is determined by the specific cells in the breast that become cancerous. There are many different types of breast cancer, and the medical community’s understanding of the disease is based on decades of research and millions of patients treated.

In 2001, Dr. Charles Perou first classified breast cancer into subtypes based on genomic patterns. The Breast Cancer Research Foundation says breast cancer is broadly divided into two types: non-invasive breast cancers and invasive breast cancers. Non-invasive breast cancers are called Stage 0 breast cancers or carcinomas in situ. These are thought to be the precursors to breast cancer, says the BCRF. While non-invasive breast cancers are not initially life-threatening, if left untreated, they can develop into invasive breast cancers, which can be fatal.

Here is a look at some of the different types of breast cancer.

- Invasive ductal carcinoma: This is

the most common type of breast cancer, according to the National Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc.® Invasive ductal carcinoma accounts for 70 to 80 percent of all breast cancer diagnoses in women and men. This cancer forms in the milk ducts and spreads beyond.

- Invasive lobular carcinoma: This is the second most common type of breast cancer, accounting for 10 to 15 percent of diagnoses, says the BCRF. Invasive lobular carcinoma originates in the milk-producing glands of the breast known as lobules. Tumors that form due to invasive lobular carcinoma more commonly grow in lines in the breast rather than in lumps, so they present differently on a mammogram.

- Inflammatory breast cancer: Inflammatory breast cancer is a rare, fast-growing type of breast cancer. The inflammatory name comes from the appearance of the skin of the breast. It looks red and inflamed, which is caused by breast cancer cells blocking lymph channels in the breast and skin, says Breast Cancer Now, a research and support charity.

- Triple-negative breast cancer: The NBCF says a diagnosis of triple-negative

breast cancer means the three most common types of receptors known to cause most breast cancer growths are not present in the cancer tumor. These receptors are estrogen, progesterone, and the HER2/neu gene. Since the tumor cells lack necessary receptors, certain treatments like hormone therapy and drugs that target these receptors are ineffective. Chemotherapy is still an option.

- Metastatic breast cancer: This type

of breast cancer is also known as Stage IV breast cancer. Metastatic breast cancer originates in an area of the breast, but spreads (metastasizes) to another part of the body, most commonly the bones, lungs, brain, or liver, according to BreastCancer.org.

Individuals hoping to learn more about breast cancer should be aware that there are various types of the disease. Which type an individual has is an important variable doctors consider as they plan a course of treatment.



Physical symptoms of breast cancer

The World Cancer Research Fund International reports that breast cancer is the second most common cancer across the globe and the number one cancer in women. Nearly three million new cases of breast cancer in women are diagnosed across the globe each year.

Breast cancer poses a notable threat to women's health, but research and resulting advancements in treatment have made the disease more treatable than ever. Women can also play a part in ensuring better outcomes in relation to breast cancer by educating themselves about the disease, including its warning signs. The MD Anderson Cancer Center notes that most changes to the breast are a byproduct of hormonal cycles or conditions that are not as formidable as breast cancer. So women should not jump to any conclusions when spotting such changes. However, the MDACC recommends women visit their physicians if they notice any of the following signs and symptoms of breast cancer.

- **Lump:** The MDACC notes that a lump in the breast or armpit is the most common symptom of breast cancer. Echoing assertions made by the MDACC, the American Cancer Society notes that most breast lumps are not cancerous. The ACS indicates a lump

that is a painless, hard mass with irregular edges is more likely to be cancer, though cancerous lumps also can be soft, round, tender, or even painful. The lack of uniformity regarding cancerous lumps is one reason why it pays for women to be extra cautious and immediately report any abnormalities in the shape and feel of their breasts to their physicians.

- **Swelling:** The ACS notes that some women with breast cancer will experience swelling of all or part of a breast even if they do not feel a lump.

- **Dimpling:** The MDACC reports that women with breast cancer may notice dimpling or puckering on the breast. According to the ACS, the dimpling can sometimes make the breast look like an orange peel.

- **Nipple retraction:** The National Cancer Institute notes that nipple retraction occurs when a nipple turns inward into the breast or lies flat against the breast. Though nipple retraction can be a sign of breast cancer, the NCI notes that's not necessarily the case for all women. Some women experience nipple retraction due to aging, breastfeeding, injury, infection, surgery, or certain conditions of the breast.

- **Changes to the skin around the**

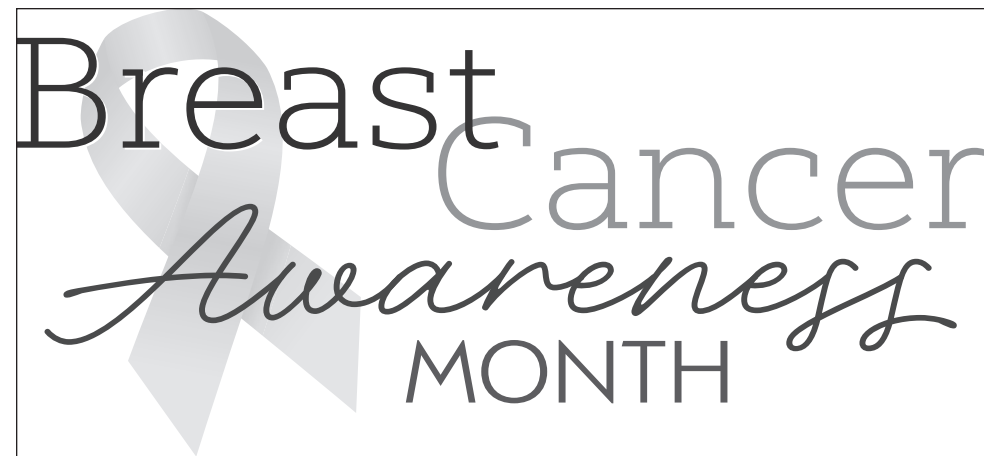
breast: The ACS notes some women with breast cancer experience redness on the skin around the breast or on the nipple. Additional changes may include dry, flaking, or thickened skin around the breast and nipple.

- **Discharge from the nipple:** The Mayo Clinic notes that it's normal to experience discharge from the nipple while pregnant and during breastfeeding. However, fluid coming out of the nipple when a woman is not pregnant or breastfeeding could be a symptom of

breast cancer.

- **Additional symptoms:** The MDACC notes that scaliness on the nipple that sometimes extends to the areola is another warning sign of breast cancer. The ACS also reports that swollen lymph nodes under the arm or near the collarbone can indicate that breast cancer has spread even before the original tumor in the breast has been felt.

Breast cancer is a formidable yet treatable disease. Women who recognize any signs and symptoms associated with breast cancer are urged to contact their physicians immediately.



Kathryn Adcock - Local survivor and community role model

"It's not a club you ever want to join, but once you are in, that bond is strong."

Breast Cancer affects about 1 in every 8 women here in America. We reached out to some members of the community who have fought that battle, so they can share their stories and advice with others. The quote above was from Kathryn Adcock, who has fought the battle quite recently, and it has taught her much about the love in this community, the things she took for granted, and the importance of checking up on your health.

Diagnosed just days before Thanksgiving, Adcock's fight has been a recent one. She had missed her first mammogram in decades and was not the biggest fan of self-checking. She knew something was off, however, and heard those words no woman ever wants to hear. During her battle, one of the main things she took away was how supportive other women can be. As mentioned above, she likened other Breast Cancer battlers and survivors to a club. Women across the county came to her to offer support and advice, and she wants to extend that to others.

"There are so many strong, strong women in this county," she said. "So many nice women, powerful. I want to be an open book too. Because this is a

scary thing to go through"

One of the major pieces of advice Adcock gave was about choice. She had a double mastectomy during her battle, but she wanted to reiterate that was just what she felt was best for her.

"I chose to do that," she said. "Not every woman is going to. And it's okay to choose. Some women don't like to talk about it openly, what they went through. They keep it private, and that is their choice, and that is okay. Every cancer is different, every woman is different, so it's fine for them to choose to handle it the way that suits them."

Battling cancer is no easy fight. Anybody can tell you that. But for Adcock, something that shook her the most was the things she took for granted, such as work.

"There's a guilt that comes with missing work," she said. "You long for a sense of normalcy. Not having that, it's hard. It is hard. And nothing is going to ever be normal the same way it was before, you know? But you have to find a new normalcy, and it will come."

Kathryn Adcock has been cancer-free for months now. She had her last chemo just one day after being able to attend a wedding for her family. There were tears. There were times she want-



ed to quit, but she said she knew it was God's plan for her.

"There were times where I would say, Jesus, take me," said Adcock. "But he wasn't ready for me yet. He wanted me to be here, and so I fought to be here."

She continued, "Get your mammograms. Do not be afraid to self-check. Feel free to reach out to others, because again- it's not a club you ever want to join. But it is one of the most supportive groups of women you'll ever know."



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What to know about inflammatory breast cancer

The World Health Organization reports that roughly 2.4 million new cases of breast cancer are diagnosed each year. That makes breast cancer the most common cancer in women across the globe.

There are various types of breast cancer, and some are more common than others. Inflammatory breast cancer diagnoses are rare, but the condition still merits the attention of those seeking to learn as much as possible about the disease.

What is inflammatory breast cancer?

The National Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc.® notes that inflammatory breast cancer (IBC) occurs when cancer cells infiltrate the skin and lymph vessels of the breast. According to Breastcancer.org, IBC often begins

in the milk ducts, which are the tubes that carry milk from the lobules to the nipple. While that means IBC is an invasive ductal carcinoma (IDC), Breastcancer.org reports inflammatory breast cancer signs and symptoms are very different from other types of IDC.

What is different about IBC?

Many forms of breast cancer are characterized by the development of a lump in or near the breast that's often the first sign of the disease. However, the NBCF notes that this is not typical of IBC. IBC cells block lymph channels in the skin, which can make the breast appear red, swollen and inflamed.

What are additional signs of IBC?

A feeling of thickness or heaviness in the breast or visible swelling are common early signs of IBC, according

to Breastcancer.org. The NBCF notes symptoms begin to appear when the lymph vessels of the breast become blocked by cancer cells. **Symptoms may include:**

- Areas of skin discoloration that are pink, red, or purple. A discolored area typically covers more than one-third of the breast.
- A persistent rash that looks like an insect bite or a bruise.
- Swelling or firmness that typically affects one breast.
- Itching, pain, and/or burning in the breast. These symptoms are persistent, and one breast may feel warmer than the other.
- Skin may appear pitted like an orange peel.
- Changes in the nipple, including inversion, which occurs when a nipple turns inward. A nipple also may flatten or dimple.
- Lymph nodes near the collarbone or under arm become swollen.

The suddenness of IBC

The NBCF notes that the rash associated with IBC may appear suddenly. Women may go to sleep at night without a rash but then awake in the morning with a breast that looks red, pink, purple, or discolored. Some rashes will

not go away, while some women experience a rash that comes and goes over time. But the rapid onset of symptoms is a hallmark of IBC, according to Breastcancer.org.

What causes IBC?

The cause of IBC remains a mystery and doctors are unsure if there are any unique risk factors for it.

How common is IBC and who gets it?

The National Cancer Institute estimates that between 1 and 5 percent of all breast cancers are IBC. While age is often cited as a risk factor for breast cancer, IBC differs somewhat from other forms of the disease in that it is most common among women younger than 40. IBC also is more common among Black women and women who are overweight. But researchers remain uncertain why IBC tends to affect these groups more than others.

IBC is rare, but knowledge of the disease can help women recognize symptoms earlier, which can improve prognosis. More information about IBC is available at breastcancer.org.

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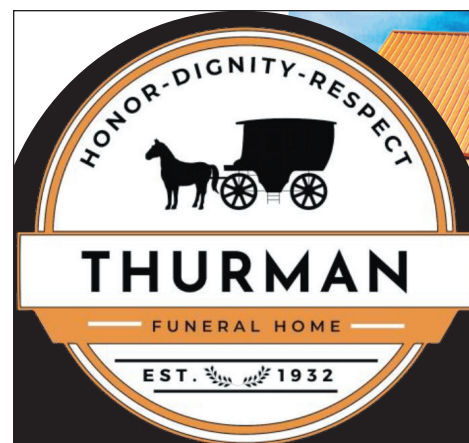


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Breast cancer screening FAQ

Preventive health care emphasizes healthy lifestyle choices like eating a nutritious, well-balanced diet and avoiding a sedentary lifestyle. Screening for various diseases, including cancer, is another important component of preventive health care that encourages individuals to be proactive in relation to their overall health.

Women may hear about breast cancer screening as early as adolescence. Despite that, it's not uncommon for women of all ages to have questions about breast cancer screening.

When should breast cancer screening begin?

This is not a one-size-fits-all answer. The American Cancer Society advises women at average breast cancer risk to begin screening between the ages of 40 and 44. Women are considered at average risk if they have no personal history or strong family history of breast cancer. Women also are considered at average risk if they do not have gene mutations linked to breast cancer or a history of chest radiation therapy prior to age 30.

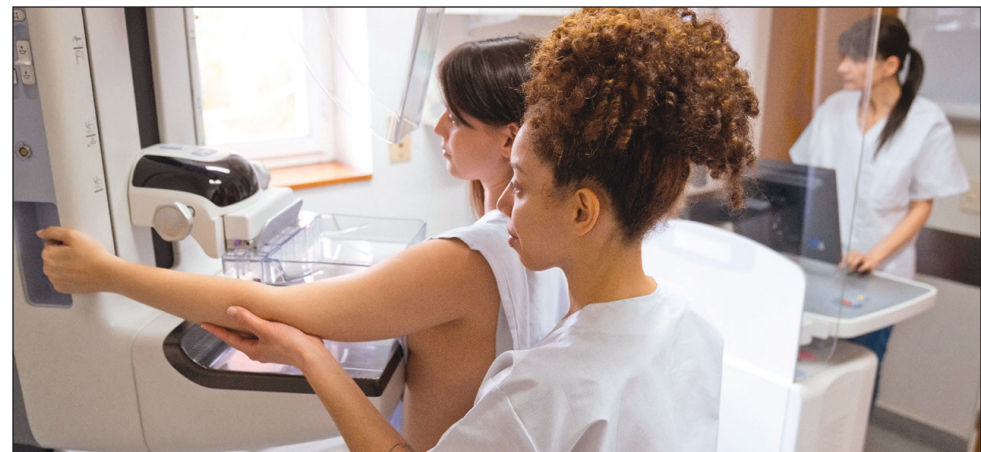
While the ACS notes women at average risk have the option to begin screening prior to age 44, the organization advises women to schedule annual mammograms beginning at age 45 and to continue getting them through age 54. If screenings do not show anything by age 54, women can then choose to get a mammogram every other year beginning at age 55.

What if I am at elevated risk for breast cancer?

Women who do not meet the criteria for average risk due to personal or family history will need to begin screening much earlier. The ACS recommends women at high risk for breast cancer get a breast MRI and a mammogram every year beginning at age 30. But the ACS also advises women to make this decision after careful discussion with their health care team. It's also notable that the ACS indicates an MRI should never be substituted for a mammogram, as it's possible an MRI will miss cancers a mammogram will find.

What is a 3D mammogram?

3D mammography is a relatively new



screening option that has piqued many women's curiosity in recent years. Brown University Health reports that a 3D mammogram rotates in an arc and takes X-rays of the breast at different angles, ultimately producing a more detailed view of the breast for radiologists to examine. By contrast, a 2D mammogram takes single X-rays at two different angles. But the ACS notes many breast imaging centers do not have 3D mammography. If given the choice between a 2D mammogram or none at all, women should always get the 2D mammogram. If 3D imaging is available, then that might be the way to go, as Brown University Health notes 3D mammography tends to detect more cancers

and produce fewer false positives.

Are mammograms foolproof?

While mammograms are highly effective at detecting breast cancer, they are not perfect. The O'Neal Cancer Center notes that dense breast tissue can make breast cancer detection more difficult. Because no screening is perfect, it's imperative that women adhere to screening guidelines even if results are consistently negative and they do not feel anything unusual during self-examinations.

Screening for cancer is an integral component of preventive health care. Women are urged to make breast cancer screening part of their preventive health care routine.

Did you know 10 percent of breast cancer is linked to genes?

The American Cancer Society reports that as many as 10 percent of breast cancer cases are thought to be caused by gene changes passed down through families. Those changes, also known as mutations, can affect a number of genes, including the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes, which both play a role in tumor suppression. A woman with a mutation in the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene has up to a 70 in 100 chance of being diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime. Men with a mutation in BRCA1 or BRCA2 also

are at greater risk of breast cancer, even though instances of the disease among men are rare. Mutations in other genes, including the TP53, STK11, PTEN, CDH1, and NF1 genes, among others, also are associated with a higher risk for breast cancer. Women with a family history of breast cancer, and particularly a first-degree relative like a mother, sister, or daughter who has had the disease, also are at greater risk for breast cancer compared to women with no such family connection.



Tennessee Tech Goes Pink to raise cancer awareness

By: Andrew Buckner
TTU Media

COOKEVILLE, Tenn. – For the third consecutive year, Tennessee Tech University is bringing together the campus and community to raise cancer awareness through "Tech Goes Pink."

Held in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month and organized by Tech's Office of Intercultural Affairs, the initiative seeks to honor cancer survivors and memorialize those lost to the disease.

Tech's programming begins with the Pink Out Game on Saturday, Oct. 17, when the Golden Eagle football team faces Eastern Kentucky. The event will recognize survivors and highlight cancer's impact on individuals and families. Local survivors will lead the team through the Golden Eagle Walk before kickoff,

and survivors will be honored during the game. Free commemorative t-shirts will be distributed, and there will be a Pink Out tailgate before the start of the game.

The initiative continues on Oct. 22 with activities on the main quad near Derryberry Hall. From 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., an exhibition will offer information, interactive activities, giveaways and more. A banner will also be available for visitors to write words of encouragement for those facing cancer.

At 5:30 pm the Tech Goes Pink walk will begin. Luminaries will be decorated and placed around the quad in memory of those lost to cancer. Survivors will share their stories, and food will be provided through the sponsorship of Tech's Auxiliary Services, along with Cookeville Regional Medical Center, the Cookeville Regional Medical Center Charitable Founda-



tion and Academy Sports + Outdoors.

"Cancer affects everyone. Tech Goes Pink is about battling this disease through a true college-town collaboration," said Charria Campbell, director of Intercultural Affairs at Tech. "From our student ambassadors and the many departments helping on campus to trusted community partners, this event seeks to educate, raise awareness and provide resources for those battling cancer, the caregivers sup-

porting them and those who have lost a loved one to the disease."

Organizers hope the event will continue to grow as a Tennessee Tech tradition that connects the university and community while providing education, awareness and support.

Individuals interested in future partnership opportunities with Tech Goes Pink can contact Charria Campbell at cycampbell@tntech.edu.

*Together....
We can Beat Breast Cancer!!*



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Groups at elevated risk for breast cancer

The number of women diagnosed with breast cancer in 2020 exceeded two million. That figure, courtesy of the World Health Organization, underscores the significance of the threat posed by the disease.

Though no one is immune to breast cancer, researchers have concluded that certain groups have a higher risk of developing the disease than others. Women who recognize their personal risk for breast cancer may not be able to change certain factors that increase their chances of developing the disease. However, recognition of their personal risk could put women in position to lower that risk in other ways. According to the WHO, the following are some groups who are at elevated risk of developing breast cancer.

- **Women:** Johns Hopkins Medicine reports that less than 1 percent of all breast cancer cases occur in men. Though it's still important for men to recognize they're not immune to the disease, women must also recognize that nearly all of the more than two million annual breast cancer diagnoses across the globe are found in women.



- **Women 50 and older:** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that most breast cancers are found in women who are 50 years old or older. A report from the National Cancer Institute indicates that a 30-year-old woman has a 1 in 204 chance (0.49 percent) of being diagnosed with breast cancer, while a 40-year-old has a 1 in 65 chance (1.55 percent) of being diagnosed. By the time women reach age 60, their risk is 1 in 28 (3.54 percent), while a 70-year-old has a 1 in 24 chance (4.09 percent)

of being diagnosed. Though women of any age can get the disease, the risk clearly increases as women get older.

- **Women who meet the criteria for being overweight or obese:** The nonprofit organization Susan G. Komen®, which helps to raise funds for the fight against breast cancer, notes that women who are overweight or obese after menopause have a 20 to 60 percent higher risk of developing breast cancer than women who are not overweight or obese. The American Cancer Society reports that hav-

ing more fat tissue increases breast cancer risk because it raises estrogen levels. However, the ACS notes the link between weight and breast cancer risk is complicated, so it's worth it for women concerned about their cancer risk to open a dialogue with their physicians.

- **Women who consume alcohol:** The MD Anderson Cancer Center reports that alcohol consumption and breast cancer risk are linked. Though the precise cause of the link is unknown, one theory suggests that consuming alcohol can increase estrogen levels as well as the levels of other hormones associated with breast cancer. However, the MDACC warns that the risk is very low, particularly for women who limit their consumption to one drink or less per day. Routinely consuming more than one alcoholic drink per day is a cause for concern.

It's vital that women recognize their risk for breast cancer. Though any woman can be diagnosed with breast cancer, certain factors, including some that can be avoided, can increase a woman's risk for the disease.



Three strategies that can lower breast cancer risk

Breast cancer affects millions of individuals each year. The World Cancer Research Fund International reports that breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in women across the globe, affecting roughly 2.3 million women each year.

Despite the global prevalence of breast cancer, various organizations report high five-year survival rates, particularly among women whose cancers are detected in the earliest stages of the disease. In fact, a 2023 study published in the journal *BMJ* found that the risk of dying from breast cancer in the five years after an early-stage diagnosis fell to 5 percent in recent years, a notable improvement from the 14 percent risk of death that was reported in the 1990s.

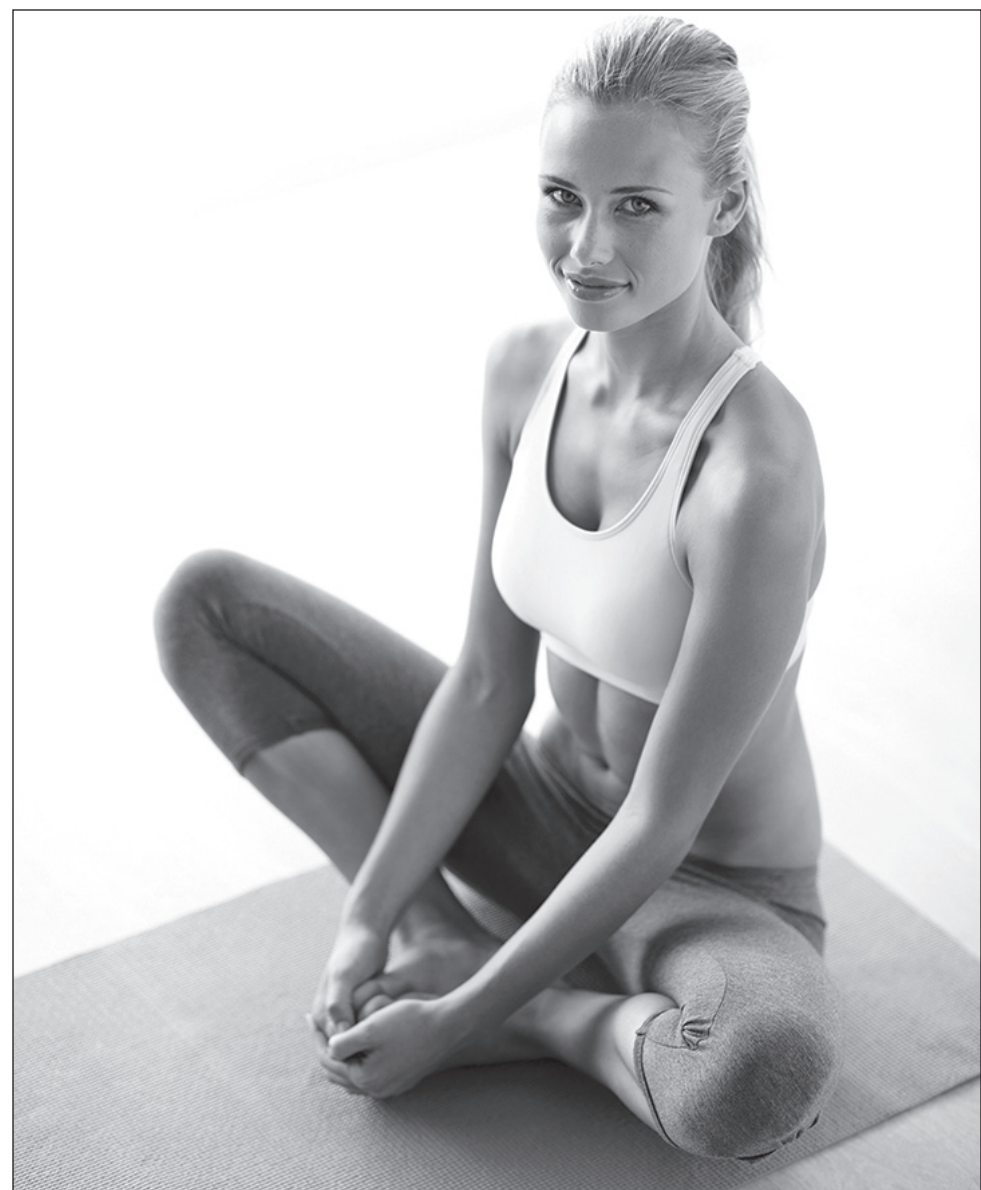
Increased survival rates for breast cancer are welcome news for women and their families. Higher survival rates reflect the tireless work of cancer researchers, who have also found links between the disease and certain lifestyle factors. Though there's no way to eliminate one's risk for breast cancer, the American Cancer Society notes certain variables are within women's control. With that in mind, women can consider these three strategies that can lead to improved overall health and might help women lower their risk for breast cancer as well.

1. Reach and maintain a healthy weight. The benefits of maintaining a healthy weight include a lower risk for

heart disease and stroke, and women should know that weight and breast cancer risk are linked as well. According to the ACS, increased body weight and weight gain as an adult are linked to a higher risk of developing breast cancer. This is especially true among post-menopausal women. A 2023 study published in the journal *BMC Women's Health* found that the chances of developing breast cancer increase among post-menopausal women who are obese.

2. Avoid a sedentary lifestyle. Exercise is one of the ways to achieve and maintain a healthy weight, so it makes sense that being physically active can reduce breast cancer risk. The National Cancer Institute reports that a 2016 meta-analysis of 38 cohort studies found that the most physically active women had between a 12 and 21 percent lower risk for breast cancer than women who were the least physically active. The NCI also notes that additional studies have found that women who become more physically active after menopause also have a lower risk for breast cancer than those who do not.

3. Limit or eliminate alcohol consumption. The ACS urges women who drink to consume no more than one alcoholic drink per day, noting that consumption of even small amounts of alcohol has been linked to an increased risk for breast cancer. Officials with the MD Anderson Cancer



Center note that the link between alcohol consumption and breast cancer risk is low. However, the MDACC notes that alcohol can contribute to unwanted weight gain, thus increasing cancer risk. In addition, alcohol can increase levels of estrogen

and other hormones associated with breast cancer.

It may be impossible to completely prevent breast cancer. However, women can embrace strategies that improve their overall health in ways that lower their risk for breast cancer.



Quotes from local survivors

I never imagined breast cancer would be part of my story, but it became a chapter that changed my life forever. The fear, the uncertainty, the treatments, and the emotional toll are things you can never fully understand until you walk through them yourself. Cancer takes so much from you, and some days, it's the little things that hurt the most.

But through it all, my faith in God carried me. I believe with all my heart that God healed me, and I will never stop being grateful for the opportunity to keep living, loving my family, raising my boys, and sharing my story.

If I could offer advice to anyone walking this road, it would be this:

Give yourself grace. You don't have to be strong every single day. Cry when you need to. Be angry when you need to. Rest when your body tells you to. You are allowed to have hard days.

Accept help. You don't have to carry everything on your own. Let people show up for you, pray for you, love you, and take care of you.

Protect your peace. You don't owe anyone a positive attitude every day. Surround yourself with people who love you through the good, the bad, and the ugly.

Trust your medical team and advocate for yourself. Ask questions, speak up when something doesn't feel right, and don't be afraid to seek answers.

Hold on to your faith and hope. There will be days when the fear feels bigger than your faith. On those days, let others believe for you. Let them pray for you when you don't have the words.

Remember that surviving is a journey, too. Finishing treatment doesn't mean you instantly feel like yourself again. There are physical and emotional scars that take time to heal. Give yourself permission to recover at your own pace.

And most importantly, you are more than your diagnosis. You are still you. You are still worthy of joy, laughter, beautiful memories, and a future you can look forward to.

Today, I don't take the little things for granted. I'm grateful for ordinary days, for time with my husband and boys, and for the blessing of being here to experience it all. Cancer changed me, but it did not take away my hope, my faith, or my desire to live this life to the fullest.

To every woman fighting, recovering, or learning to live beyond breast cancer: I am praying for you. I'm cheering for you. And I hope you know that even on the days you feel broken, you are still so incredibly strong.

Keep going, one day at a time. You don't have to figure out the whole journey today. Just take the next step.

Jamie Sawyer

"I want to encourage everyone to get yearly mammograms! In 2022, while on vacation, I got a call asking me to come in for a second mammogram and an Ultrasound. I really thought nothing about it because I had no symptoms of any kind. After getting these tests, I had to have a biopsy. From there, I had many tests, and it was decided by my doctors and myself that I would undergo a double Mastectomy. I then had to have four Chemo treat-

ments plus six infusions after the Chemo. It wasn't easy, but with the help and prayers of my family and friends, I made it! I've been cancer-free for four years and counting! My faith in God carried me through many rough days. I thank God every day for his many blessings. God is faithful, and He's not through with me yet! If I can be an encouragement to anyone, please let me know."

Barbara Carr

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