



# Wellness Watch



## October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month!

The National Cancer Institute reports that for 2007, new cases of breast cancer in the United States are estimated to be 178,480 women and 2,030 men. Of these, about 40,460 women and 450 men will die from the disease. Therefore, it's important to be proactive about your health by fully understanding the disease and practicing preventive measures to avoid getting it.



### Risk Factors :

A risk factor is anything that affects your chance of getting a disease, such as breast cancer.

- **Age**-breast cancer risk increases with age.
- **Gender**-the breast cells in women are constantly exposed to the growth-promoting effects of the female hormones estrogen & progesterone.
- **Genetics**-About 5% to 10% of breast cancer cases are thought to be hereditary.
- **Family History**-breast cancer risk is higher among women whose close blood relatives have this disease.
- **Race**-White women are slightly more likely to develop breast cancer than are African-American women.
- **Menstrual Periods**-Women who started menstruating at an early age (before age 12) or who went through menopause at a late age (after age 55) have a slightly higher risk of breast cancer.
- **Previous Chest Radiation**-Women who, as children or young adults, had radiation therapy to the chest area as treatment for another cancer (such as Hodgkin disease or non-Hodgkin lymphoma) are at significantly increased risk for breast cancer.
- **Being Overweight or Obese**-Being overweight or obese has been found to increase breast cancer risk, especially for women after menopause.

### Prevention:

Leading a healthy lifestyle and practicing preventive health care measures can help lower your risk for developing breast cancer.

- **Physical Activity & A Healthy Diet**-This combination will help you achieve or maintain a healthy weight. Exercising 45-60 minutes a day on most days of the week and practicing a well-balanced diet that includes healthy choices from the Food Guide Pyramid is a smart & safe way to help you reach your goals.
- **Avoid Alcohol**-research studies have showed that high levels of alcohol intake increases the risk of breast cancer. If you drink alcohol, drink in moderation.
- **Emotional Health**-research studies have linked high levels of stress with certain cancers. Maintain a healthy attitude by practicing activities that bring joy and balance to your life.
- **Avoid Tobacco Use**-smoking has been linked to increased risks of many types of cancer.
- **Breast Cancer Screenings**-Use the chart below to see which screening methods you should use and how often.

| Age 20-39            | Frequency              | Age 40 and older     | Frequency    |
|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Clinical Breast Exam | at least every 3 years | Mammogram            | once a year  |
| Breast Self-Exam     | once a month           | Clinical Breast Exam | once a year  |
|                      |                        | Breast Self-Exam     | once a month |

Unfortunately, there's no sure way to avoid breast cancer, but there are over 1.7 million female breast cancer survivors in the United States. Understanding the disease, being an informed health care consumer, practicing preventive health measures, and leading a healthy lifestyle can lower the likelihood of developing breast cancer and increase the likelihood of surviving it.

Show your support for Breast Cancer Awareness Month! Stay healthy and take advantage of the wellness discount programs and services provided through your health insurance company.