

# Breast Health Advocate Talking Points

## *Breast Cancer Doesn't Sleep! Did You Get Your Mammogram?*

Breast cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in women. One out of eight women will develop breast cancer and African American women have the highest death rate of any ethnic or racial group. To reduce the unnecessary pain and suffering caused by this disease, please follow these breast health tips.

- Practice Breast Self-Awareness: Know your breasts. Pick a memorable day to examine your breast routinely, in the shower or while lying in bed. Alert your health care provider for any changes including a new mass, nipple discharge, heaviness, change in color, armpit swelling or unusual pain.
- Breast cancer is usually not painful. Breast cancer most often presents with a painless mass.
- Mammograms reduce mortality by detecting breast cancer on average 2-3 years before a woman detects an abnormal lump. Undergo screening every year!
- Women who have average risk should begin screening at the age of 40. Get your mammogram annually.
- Women with a strong family history, a history of previous breast biopsies, a history of radiation or a known genetic mutation should discuss when to begin screening with their health care provider. Recommendations vary but some women will need to begin screening in their **twenties**.

- Find a breast imaging facility that offers 3D mammography. In studies, a 3D mammogram has a higher detection rate and less unnecessary call backs. In Missouri, legislation has been passed to eliminate any additional co-pay for a 3D mammogram.
- Breast density indicates the amount of connective and glandular tissue relative to fatty tissue measured during a mammogram. The US Food and Drug Administration has recommended that a mammogram report categorize a woman's breast density. For women with increased breast density, there can be a higher risk of developing breast cancer and the mammogram may be less accurate. The radiologist may recommend additional imaging, like an MRI or ultrasound. Almost forty percent of women have increased breast density.
- Weight gain throughout our adult years increases our risk for developing breast cancer after menopause. Try to avoid weight creep. Gaining over 20 lbs. from early adulthood to menopause increases your risk of breast cancer.
- Consume 5-9 fruits and vegetables each day. Each serving is  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup. Women who consistently consume a high amount of fruits and vegetables have a lower breast cancer risk. Vegetables high in carotenoids like kale, spinach, carrots, and bell peppers seem particularly important in reducing breast cancer risk.
- Exercise 30 minutes daily to reduce your breast cancer risk. Thirty minutes of purposeful walking or some similar intensity exercise for at least 5 days a week (150 minutes) reduces the development of breast cancer.
- Ideally abstain from alcohol or limit alcohol intake to one drink each day. Refrain from tobacco use.

- Try to avoid hormone replacement therapy. If you take hormone replacement therapy, take it for as short a duration as possible and use the lowest dose.
- Triple negative breast cancer is a subtype of breast cancer that does not express three of the most common receptors that drive breast cancer growth. Triple negative breast cancer is more commonly diagnosed in younger African American women. Common therapies like hormone therapy and targeted therapy are not indicated. Because this subtype is more aggressive than others, it is important to screen routinely and report any abnormal findings right away.
- Regardless of ethnic and racial group, if breast cancer is diagnosed before it has spread to the lymph nodes or distant organs, 5-year survival is over 90%. Early detection saves lives!
- The Show Me Healthy Women program provides free mammograms to women who are uninsured in the state of Missouri. This program is available in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Enter “The National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program” into your web browser to find participating facilities near you.
- The National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program also provides free insurance for women who are diagnosed with breast cancer.

**Follow these Breast Health Tips! Let's Choose Life! Resources**