

"Awareness Protects Beauty and Saves Lives"



Breast Cancer Awareness

This booklet is about cancer of the breast. It tells about the awareness and importance of early diagnosis, self-examination and follow-up care.

Breast cancer is curable if it is detected early. Do your part to help create awareness and pass this message on to your loved ones, friends and community. Let's be positive. You can make a difference.

This is a community health message from the National Cancer Control Programme in commemoration of World Breast Cancer Awareness Month - October.



1. What is a cancer?

It is an abnormal and irregular division of cells which has escaped from the normal mechanism of the body.

2. What are the common cancers in Sri Lanka?

Female

1.Breast cancer
2.Uterine cervical cancer
3.Ovarian cancer

Male

1. Oral cancer
2. Lung cancer
3. Oesophageal cancer

* Around 2500 new breast cancer patients are detected every year. Of this 2% are males.

3. What is breast cancer?

Abnormal division of cells in mammary glands or ducts of the breast.





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- Know how your breasts normally look and feel
- Know what changes to look for
- Look and feel for changes
- Report any lump or changes of the breast to a doctor
- Meet a Doctor / Nursing Sister or Officer / Public Health Midwife for clinical breast examination.
    - Between 20-40 years every 3 years
    - Over 40 years - annually

Breast cancer is curable if detected early

Face with Courage & be a Winner

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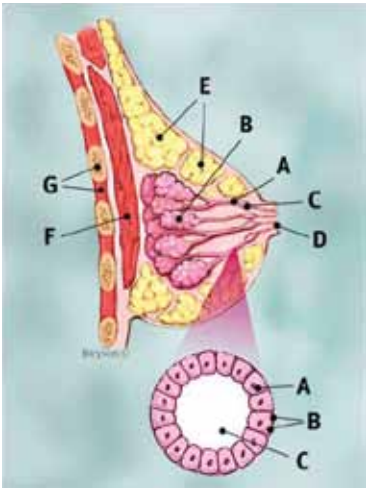
Longitudinal section of a female breast



A - ducts
B - lobules
C - dilated section of duct to hold milk
D - nipple
E - fat
F - pectoralis major muscle
G - chest wall / rib cage

Enlargement
A - normal duct cells
B - basement membrane
C - lumen (center of duct)

4. Who are at higher risk for breast cancer?

- Family history of breast cancer (mother/sister)
- Females with history of breast diseases
- Childless Females or those who gave birth after the age of 35
- Females who had first menstruation before 11 years of age.
- Late menopause (stopping periods) after 55 years
- Obesity or increased weight gain following menopause
- Prolonged exposure to hormone containing pills (esp. estrogen) without medical advice

5. Does breast cancer occur among women who are athigh risk only?

No. Most breast cancers are detected in women without any of these risk factors. Furthermore, all the women with risk factors will not develop breast cancer.

6. What are the symptoms of breast cancer?

An asymmetry of the breast (recent change), breast lump, dimpling, changes in the skin of the breast (similar to an orange peel or thickening), nipple change/ retraction, discharge from nipples, pain in the breast.

7. Are all breast lumps cancers?

No. Only some of them are cancers.

8. What is the importance of early detection of breast cancer?

If detected early, can be treated successfully and can lead a normal life.



9. Is it possible to detect breast cancer early by yourself?

Yes. Self-examination of the breast by the female (monthly).



Steps of Self-examination of the breast

- Select an enclosed location. Remove all clothing from the upper part of your body.
- Stand in front of a mirror
- Observe both breasts in the positions indicated below
- Observe for any changes of the breasts in following positions: Stand erect with arms by the sides/ raise both hands over the head/ place both hands on hips and press down

Palpate for changes



- Lying down on a bed, seated or standing
- If you are lying down, put a towel under the shoulder of the examined breast



- Examine the right breast with the left hand and the left breast with the right hand.
- Raise the arm above the head and examine the armpit on each side.



- Use the fat of the fingers
- Feel a breast in clockwise direction from outward to inwards towards nipple. Feel for any lumps, discomfort or pain.



- Examine the armpit (axilla) of the same side for similar abnormalities.
- Squeeze the dark area around the nipple (areola) with the thumb and first finger for any discharge other than milk

10. How often should you do it?

Every woman should do this monthly. Women with menstrual periods should do the examination one week after monthly period. Women after menopause should do it on a particular date of each month.

11. What should you do if you find an abnormality?

Go to the Well Woman Clinic in your area, Consult a doctor in government or private hospital or your family doctor, Surgical Clinic / Breast Clinic in the closest hospital.

12. What is a Well Woman Clinic?

A clinic conducted by Medical Officer / Public Health Nursing Sister of the area for women for early detection of breast cancer, uterine cervical cancer and other diseases.

(For further information contact your area Public Health Midwife).



14. What is mammography?

A low dose X-ray examination which can detect breast cancer even before the detection of a lump by palpation.

13. What are the usual tests done to detect breast cancer?

Mammography, ultrasound scan and examination of breast cells by inserting a fine needle into the breast to get a sample are some of the tests available.

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A breast cancer can be detected using mammography about two years prior to detection through self-examination. Women over 50 years and women at higher risk of breast cancer are recommended for a mammography screening. Your doctor will recommend whether you need a mammogram.

If breast cancer is diagnosed, appropriate treatment will be planned by the team of medical specialists.

If breast cancer is detected early, it will be more amenable for better treatment outcomes, breast conservation, breast reconstruction and restoration of your body.



Join hands to save lives



Ministry of Health
- Sri Lanka



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