

## National Black Leadership Initiative on Cancer III: Community Networks Program *Breast Cancer Fact Sheet*

**Breast cancer** is the over growth of abnormal cells in the breast also known as a malignant tumor.

### What every woman should know about Breast cancer:

- Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in women (lung cancer is #1).
- Breast Cancer is the most common form of cancer diagnosed in women.
- One in eight women will develop breast cancer during her lifetime.

### Risk Factors:

The risk of developing breast cancer is not the same for all women. The following factors are known to increase a woman's chances of developing this disease:

- **Gender** - All women are at risk of developing breast cancer; although rare, it can also develop in men.
- **Age** – Age is the most important risk factor. Risk increases over the age of 50.
- **Personal History** – Past history of breast cancer increases the risk of developing a new cancer in the other breast or a different part of the same breast.
- **Family History** - Risk increases in daughters or sisters of women with breast cancer and can also increase with a positive paternal family history.
- **Reproductive History** – Risk is increased in women who have never had children. Women, who have had their first child after age 30, may be at an even greater risk than women had children at a younger age.
- **Menstrual History** – Women who started menstruating at an early age (before age 12) or experience menopause late (after age 50) are at increased risk.
- **Diet** – Obesity, alcohol and a high fat diet, may be a contributor to breast cancer risks.
- **Genetic** – Specific alterations in certain genes (BRCA1, BRCA2 and others) increase the risk of breast cancer. These are rare.
- **Estrogen** - Evidence suggests that the longer a woman is exposed to estrogen (estrogen made by the body, taken as a drug, or delivered by a patch) the more likely she is to develop breast cancer.
- **Race** - White women are slightly more likely to develop breast cancer, but African-American women are more likely to die of this cancer. Many experts now feel that the main reason for this is because African- American women have more aggressive tumors.

- **Diethylstilbestrol (DES)** - In the 1940s through the 1960s some pregnant women were given DES to prevent miscarriages. Recent studies have shown that these women have a slightly increased risk of developing breast cancer.
- **Previous Abnormal Breast Biopsy and Atypical Hyperplasia** – These increase a woman's breast cancer risk.
- **Previous breast radiation** - Women who as children or young adults have 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.

### Recognizing Signs and Symptoms

**Breast Cancer** often occurs with no signs or symptoms. Warning signs can include change in breast size or shape, breast lumps and / or thickening, bleeding from the nipple, skin irritation and retraction. If any of the above occurs, see a physician.

### GUIDELINES FOR EARLY DETECTION

Early detection is the key to surviving breast cancer. It is highly curable if it is found and treated early.

**Breast Self Examination (BSE)** Do BSE once a month starting at age 20, earlier if sexually active.

### Clinical Breast Examination

Have your breasts examined every three years by your doctor between the ages of 20 and 40, if there are no symptoms and you do not fall into a high-risk profile and if you do not use birth control pills or hormones.

Have your breast examined by your doctor every year (preferably when it is time for a Pap smear) if 40 or older.

### Mammography

Annual screening mammography should begin at age 40. Women who are at increased risk for breast cancer, regardless of age, should seek medical advice about having mammograms and how often to be screened.

*To find a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) certified mammogram facility near you, contact the Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER, your physician, local health department or The American Cancer Society. For more information about the National Black Leadership Initiative on Cancer III, Call, 1-800-724-1185.  
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