

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women worldwide and one of the leading causes of death from cancer in women. The good news is that more women are surviving a breast cancer diagnosis because of screening and improving treatments.

### What is breast Cancer?

Our body is made up of cells. Cells are born; they divide and eventually die with new cells replacing them. Cells sometimes keep dividing and do not die. Cancer can develop when this happens. Breast cancer occurs when this happens in the cells of the breast tissue. Finding breast cancer early can save your life.

### What increases my risk?

**A Risk Factor** - is anything that increases the likelihood that you will develop a disease. Having a risk factor does not mean that you will develop a disease. Risk factors for breast cancer include:

**Age** - The older you are the greater your chances of developing the disease. Most cases of breast cancer occur in women over the age of 50.

**Alcohol**. The more alcohol you drink the greater your risk, regardless of the type of alcoholic beverage you drink.

**Dense breast tissue** - If you have “dense” breast tissue i.e. you do not have “fatty” breast tissue you may be at increased risk for breast cancer because it can be more difficult to detect at any early stage.

**Family history of breast cancer**. Having one or more close family members who had breast cancer. This can either be on your father’s or mother’s side of the family. The risk is greatest if the relative was diagnosed before the age of 50. Close relatives include a sister or brother, mother or father, or your son or daughter. If there is a family history, your doctor may recommend genetic testing to help determine your risk.

**Family of personal history of colorectal or ovarian cancer** - There is a relationship between breast, ovarian and colorectal cancer so a family or personal history of one of these increases the risk of developing one of the other two.

**Hormone replacement therapy (HRT)** - Combined HRT increases the risk of breast cancer. Using a combined (estrogen and progesterone) HRT for greater than 5 years increases your risk. This gradually decreases when you stop using HRT. Consult with your doctor before stopping HRT.

**Menstruation** - Starting your periods at a young age (before age 12) or having a late menopause (after age 55).

**Childbearing** - Never having children or having your 1st child after age 30.

**Obesity** - Weight gain, especially after menopause.

**Personal breast cancer history** - If you have had breast cancer you are at risk for it recurring.

**Previous breast disorders** - If you have a personal history of a breast disorder you may be at increased risk. Be sure to keep your medical reports for future reference.

**Radiation therapy** - Prior radiation therapy to the chest area increases the likelihood of developing breast cancer.

### What decreases my risk?

**Breast-feeding** - The longer a woman breast feeds her children, the lower her risk for breast cancer.

**Diet** - Eat 5 – 10 servings of fruits and vegetables a day. Choose foods high in fibre and low in fat.

**Having Children** - A woman’s risk of breast cancer is lower the more children she has. Having your first child before the age of 30 also decreases the risk.

**Physical Activity** - Being physically active for at least 30 minutes a day will lower your risk of breast cancer.

**Tobacco** - Avoid using tobacco products and exposure to second-hand smoke may lower your risk.

### Screening

**Screening** refers to looking for the presence of a disease or condition before symptoms develop.

Screening on a regular basis can reduce your risk of developing breast cancer. In the Cayman Islands it is recommended that women have a mammogram every two years beginning at the age of 40 or as recommended by their doctor.

**A Mammogram** is an x-ray of your breasts. It is suggested that all women have a clinical breast exam (CBE) on an annual basis. This is an examination of your breast by a trained medical practitioner.

### Breast awareness

Whatever age you are, you should be practising breast awareness. This means becoming familiar with the way your breasts look and feel. Be alert to the fact that different areas of your breast may feel different. If you are still having a period, you should also be aware that your breasts will feel differently depending on where you are in your monthly cycle. An important part of breast awareness is a monthly breast self exam (BSE). There are two parts to a BSE – Feeling and Looking.

## What changes am I feeling and looking?

**Lumps** - A new lump, thickening or bumpy area in one breast or armpit.

**Appearance** - Changes in the shape or of your breasts. Changes in the size of your breast. Changes in the shape of your breast. Changes in the colour of your breast, especially if redness develops. "Puckering" or "dimpling" of the skin.

**Feelings** - Pain or discomfort that is new or different from normal for you especially if it is felt only on one side.

**Nipple Change** - Discharge from the nipple that is not associated with breast feeding especially if it is pussy or bloody. Development of reddish areas that do not heal or a rash around the nipple. Any change in nipple position including a nipple that is inverted or "pulled in" or one that is pointing differently.

**Check for changes** - in size or shape by standing in front of a mirror. Feel for changes while standing in the shower and again while lying in bed.

## 5 Point code for breast awareness

Know what is normal for you.

Look at and feel your breasts.

Know what changes to look for.

Report any changes without delay to your doctor.

## Mammograms in the Cayman Islands

There are three places to get a mammogram in the Cayman Islands.

The Cayman Islands Hospital Tel: 244-2880

Chrissie Tomlinson Memorial Hospital Tel: 949-6066

Medlab Tel: 949-7331

At the time of printing the average cost of a screening mammogram is \$150.

## What if I can't afford a mammogram?

If you do not have an insurance plan that covers the cost of a mammogram you may contact a member of the Lions Club of Tropical Gardens for a voucher for a free mammogram. Alternatively, you may contact the Cayman Islands Cancer Society which acts as an issuer of vouchers for the Lions Club of Tropical Gardens.

## Contact us

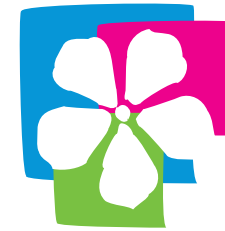
For more information on our programs and the Cayman Islands Cancer Society, we invite you to stop by and visit us between the hours of 8am and 5pm Monday thru Friday.

### Cayman Islands Cancer Society

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