

## Topics In Health

Healthy You Article – October 10, 2008

### October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

By Mary Perkins – Wellness Center Manager

One of the most frightening and difficult health problems a woman can face is the discovery of a lump in the breast. While all lumps are not cancer, any suspicious area should be brought to the attention of your doctor.

Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers to afflict women, accounting for one of every three cancer diagnoses in America. It can be a disfiguring disease, and a life-threatening one. However it is important for women and their families to know that over the long run breast cancer in many cases is a curable illness. The current treatments available allow for many people to go from cancer patient to cancer survivor.

It is important that all patients with breast cancer make informed decisions about treatment options. It is important to become educated and to stay positive during treatment.

There is life after breast cancer and more and more people are overcoming breast cancer and leading normal lives. At this moment there are over one million survivors of breast cancer living in the United States.

Patients with breast cancer have many questions. Doctors, nurses and other members of the health care team can often answer these questions. In some cases, doctors recommend that a patient talk with a counselor, social worker or member of the clergy.

Family members and relatives can provide help and encouragement, and patients often find comfort in breast cancer support groups which are active in most areas.

Each individual has different needs and what works for one individual may not work for another. There are many organizations and special programs for patients with breast cancer, as well as many different books and web sites on the internet.

### What is Breast Cancer?

Breast cancer is a disease in which malignant (cancer) cells form in the tissues of the breast. It differs by individual, age group, and even the kinds of cells within the tumors themselves. Obviously no woman wants to receive this diagnosis, but hearing the words “breast cancer” doesn't always mean an end. It can be the beginning of learning how to fight, getting the facts, and finding hope.

### Statistics

- Women in the United States get breast cancer more than any other type of cancer except for skin cancer.
- Women have a 1 in 8 chance of developing breast cancer in their lifetime.
- Non-Hispanic Caucasian women are more likely to develop breast cancer.
- There is a new case of breast cancer diagnosed every 2 minutes.
- Approximately 2 million women in the United States are currently living with breast cancer.
- Breast cancer is second only to lung cancer as a cause of cancer death in women.
- Over 200,000 women are diagnosed with breast cancer and more than 40,000 will die each year.
- Approximately 1,700 men will also be diagnosed with breast cancer and 450 will die each year.

### Risk Factors

The exact cause of breast cancer is unknown. There are some risk factors which increase a woman's chances of developing breast cancer in her lifetime.

- \* Breast cancer is uncommon under age 35 and the risk increases for women over the age of 50.
  - \*Having a family history of breast cancer in mother, sister, or daughter, especially at a young age.
  - \*Never having had children or having had the first child after age 30.
  - \*Having breasts that are dense with increased amounts of lobular and ductal tissue.
  - \*Having breasts exposed to radiation before age 30, such as in the treatment for Hodgkin's disease.
  - \*Taking estrogen replacement therapy for prolonged periods.
  - \*Having previously been diagnosed with breast cancer.

### Discovery

Most women become aware of a problem with their breast when a suspicious site is identified on a screening mammogram or by noticing a

lump in the breast when doing a monthly self-exam.

A biopsy, or sampling of fluid or tissue from the breast, must be performed to make the diagnosis of breast cancer.

Breast cancer is most easily treated in the early stages when it is limited to the breast tissue.

Additional information, as well as a thorough presentation about breast cancer entitled Beyond the Shock, may be found on the internet by clicking on the About Breast Cancer tab at [www.nationalbreastcancer.org](http://www.nationalbreastcancer.org).

**October** is Breast Cancer Awareness month. If you haven't had a routine mammogram in the past year, please make an appointment today by calling your Health Care Provider or your local hospital Breast Care department .. The friendly department staff cares about your comfort and will listen to your concerns.

"HEALTHY YOU" is a weekly column prepared by health care providers and staff at North Country Hospital and Health System. **For** information or to suggest a topic **for** this column, please call Mary Perkins, Wellness Center Manager, 802-334-3226, or email [mperkins@nchsi.org](mailto:mperkins@nchsi.org).

## Precautions for Safer Seniors - Stay Safe

### Make Your Home Safe and Secure

- **Install good locks on doors and windows. Use them! Don't hide keys in mailboxes and planters or under doormats. Instead, leave an extra set of keys with a neighbor or friend.**
- **Ask for photo identification from service or delivery people before letting them in. If you are the least bit worried, call the company to verify.**
  - **Consider a home alarm system that provides emergency monitoring for burglary, fire and medical emergencies.**

### Watch Out for Con Artists

- **Don't fall for anything that sounds too good to be true - a free vacation, sweepstakes, prizes, cures for cancer and arthritis, a low risk high- yield investment scheme.**
- **Never give your credit card, phone card, Social Security, or bank account number to anyone over the phone. It's illegal for telemarketers to ask for these numbers to verify a prize or gift.**
- **Don't let anyone rush you into signing anything- an insurance policy, a sales agreement, a contract. Read it carefully and have someone you trust check it over.**
- **Beware of individuals claiming to represent companies, consumer organizations, or government agencies that offer to recover lost money from fraudulent telemarketers for a fee.**
- **If you're suspicious, check it out with the police, the Better Business Bureau, or your local consumer protection office. Call the National Consumers League Fraud Information Center at 800- 876-7060.**

**Note:**

**The Police Department Host the Baltimore City Police Explorers Program. This youth group is for children between the ages of 14-21. They work hand and hand with police officers, attend meetings and events and participate in community projects. Meetings are held in each district on Friday nights. For more information please give your respective districts a call ...**