



breast cancer awareness

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3 Potential Side Effects of Breast Cancer Treatments

New Technology Improves Mammograms, Biopsies

Breast Cancer Survival Rates Soar

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Growing Awareness to Save Lives

In the battle against breast cancer, early detection is a woman's most powerful weapon.

In fact, according to the National Cancer Institute, when breast cancer is detected in an early, localized stage, the five-year survival rate is 98 percent. That's why it is so important for all women to make breast health awareness a regular part of their healthcare routine.

A mammogram can detect breast cancer in its earliest, most treatable stages, and many major health organizations recommend annual mammogram screenings for women beginning at age 40. Experts also recommend clinical breast exams and breast self-exams to check for breast abnormalities on a regular basis. Any woman noticing unusual changes in her breasts should

contact her healthcare provider immediately. Women of all ages should speak to their doctor about his or her personalized recommendations for breast cancer screening.

As we recognize Breast Cancer Awareness Month, we remember the women who have lost their lives to the disease, and we voice our support for those in the fight of their lives.



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breast cancer awareness



Breast cancer signs and symptoms

Learning to recognize the signs and symptoms of breast cancer can increase the likelihood of early diagnosis, which greatly improves women's chances of surviving this disease.



New technology improves mammograms...

Southeastern Health's Southeastern Radiology Associates has new technology that will improve the mammogram experience for most patients.



Understanding inflammatory breast cancer

Breast cancer comes in many different forms and can present in various ways. Never overlook any abnormality on or around the breast.



Breast cancer survival rates soar

Increased knowledge about breast cancer, early detection through examinations and mammography and improved treatments are helping to drive up the survival rates of breast cancer.



Determining breast cancer stage

Determining breast cancer stage is a complex process, but one that can help doctors develop the most effective course of treatment.

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Breast cancer signs and symptoms

Breast cancer is a formidable foe. According to the World Health Organization, an estimated 627,000 women lost their lives to breast cancer in 2018. But women are not helpless in the fight against breast cancer, as the WHO notes early detection is critical and could potentially save thousands of lives each year.

A proactive approach is a key component of protecting oneself against breast cancer. While the National Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc.® notes that many breast cancer symptoms are invisible and not noticeable without a professional cancer screening, women can keep an eye out for certain signs of breast cancer they might be able to detect on their own. Monthly self-exams can help women more easily identify changes in their breasts. During such self-exams, women can look for the following signs and symptoms and are advised to report any abnormalities they discover to their physicians immediately.

- Changes in how the breast or nipple feels: The NBCF says nipple tenderness or a lump or thickening in or near the breast or underarm could indicate the presence of breast cancer. Some women may notice changes in the skin texture or an enlargement of the pores in the skin of their breast. In many instances, skin texture has been described as being similar to the texture of an orange peel. Lumps in the breast also may indicate breast cancer, though not all lumps are cancerous.
- Change in appearance of the breast or nipple: Unexplained changes in the size or shape of the breast; dimpling anywhere on the breast; unexplained swelling or shrinking of the breast, particularly when the shrinking or swelling is exclusive to one side only; and a nipple that is turned slightly inward or inverted are some signs and symptoms of breast cancer that can affect the appearance of the breast or nipple. It is common for women's breasts to be asymmetrical, but sudden asymmetry should be



brought to the attention of a physician.

- Discharge from the nipple: The NBCF notes that any discharge from the nipple, but particularly a clear or bloody discharge, could be a sign of breast cancer. The NBCF also advises women that a milky discharge when they are not breastfeeding is not linked to breast cancer but should be discussed with a physician.

Learning to recognize the signs and symptoms of breast cancer can increase the likelihood of early diagnosis, which greatly improves women's chances of surviving this disease.

3 potential side effects of breast cancer treatments

Cancer is a painful, potentially life-threatening disease. Though discomfort might be the first warning sign that compels people to visit their physicians on the road to receiving a cancer diagnosis, cancer treatments can produce a host of side effects, including pain, as well.

According to the Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center, breast cancer treatments can create both long-term side effects and late side effects. Long-term side effects are those that begin during treatment and continue after all treatments have stopped, while late side effects refers to symptoms that can appear weeks, months or even years after treatments have ended.

The list of potential side effects of breast cancer treatments is lengthy, but may include the following conditions or issues.

1. Fatigue

The nonprofit organization

Breastcancer.org notes that fatigue is the most common side effect of breast cancer treatments, with some estimates suggesting it affects as many as 90 percent of all patients. Some breast cancer patients may experience fatigue after treatment and find it's worsening because they are eating less and not getting enough nutrients. In such instances, the initial fatigue may make people too tired to cook, ultimately contributing to more fatigue when they are not eating or eating convenient yet potentially unhealthy foods. Cooking healthy foods in bulk when fatigue is not overwhelming and accepting others' offers to cook is a great way for cancer patients to ensure their diets are helping them combat fatigue and not making fatigue worse.

2. Lymphedema

Johns Hopkins School of Medicine notes that, following breast cancer treatment, some patients may suffer from lymphedema, a condition characterized by the accumulation

of lymphatic fluid in the tissues. Lymphedema most often occurs in the arms, but can contribute to swelling in other parts of the body as well. Why some people suffer from lymphedema after treatment and others don't is a mystery, though surgeons at Johns Hopkins Breast Center have noticed a low occurrence of lymphedema in patients who have undergone sentinel node biopsies or axillary node dissection. Breast cancer patients are at risk of lymphedema for the rest of their lives after treatment, and while there's no way to prevent it, patients should avoid getting needle sticks or blood pressure tests in arms where lymph nodes were removed. In addition, any injuries or cuts in arms where lymph nodes were removed should be treated with vigilance.

3. Infertility

Many women will stop menstruating while undergoing chemotherapy or after chemo treatments, and that cessation is often temporary. These irregularities

may be traced to hormonal therapies that make the ovaries stop producing eggs. However, in some instances, even premenopausal women may have trouble getting pregnant after hormonal therapy. Breastcancer.org notes that women whose periods do not return after treatment may still be fertile, but also notes that women who are close to menopause when beginning chemo may become permanently infertile. Women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer who are concerned about post-treatment infertility should speak with their physicians immediately about their prospects of getting pregnant after treatment, including fertility treatments and the potential safety risks of getting pregnant after being diagnosed with breast cancer.

Breast cancer treatments save lives every day. When discussing treatments with their physicians, breast cancer patients should ask questions about potential short- and long-term side effects.

New technology improves mammograms, biopsies

LUMBERTON — Southeastern Health's Southeastern Radiology Associates (SeRA) now has new technology that will improve the mammogram experience for most patients, especially ones who have found past mammograms painful. SeRA is the first radiology office in the area to offer this technology.

A new diagnostic 3D mammography machine, the Genius 3D from Hologic, has been added at the facility, and both of SeRA's 3D mammogram machines now have new SmartCurve™ comfort paddles.

"Some women avoid getting mammograms because the traditional scans can be uncomfortable," said Gibson Cancer Center Patient Navigator and Physician Assistant Catherine Gaines. "The SmartCurve™ system uses a curved surface and is clinically proven to deliver a more comfortable mammogram without compromising the quality of the scan. We're very excited to offer this to our patients."

The average mammogram requires about 12 pounds per square inch of pressure using a flat paddle, according to Gaines. With the new paddles, only six pounds of pressure per square inch

are needed. According to Hologic, a recent clinical study compared the SmartCurve™ system to traditional flat paddles found SmartCurve™ improved comfort in 93 percent of women who reported moderate to severe discomfort with standard compression.

"So you're cutting the amount of force on that breast tissue in half, and that is fantastic," Gaines said. "Because of that curve, less pounds of pressure are required to be put on the breast tissue in order to get a beautiful image so we can really find cancers at an earlier stage."

SmartCurve™ paddles may not be suitable for all women, depending on breast size. Patients should consult with their mammogram technologist for more information before their screening exam.

The new machine also comes with the Hologic Affirm Biopsy system, which enables the unit to pinpoint subtle lesions and faint calcifications, including those that may only be visible with tomosynthesis (3D). The lateral arm upright biopsy accessory allows more flexibility to access challenging lesion locations. With the accompanying new Akrus

chair, patients can be positioned for biopsies based on access and patient comfort.

SeRA Radiologist Dr. Sam Armani, who is fellowship trained in breast imaging from Duke University Medical Center, said that, as well as being more comfortable, the new machine will detect more invasive cancers, reduce false positives, and is FDA approved as superior to conventional 2D mammography for all women, including those with dense breasts.

"This is the latest and greatest in 3D imaging," Dr. Armani said. "And it will help us image more patients. The 3D mammography unit allows us to detect cancer significantly earlier than previous technology, which is crucial to successful cancer treatment. It also makes detecting fake-outs on the images much easier, which can happen in 2D images when the breast tissue lays on top of each other. The 3D image allows us to see inside the breast in slices, making it easier to know what we need to call patients back to examine more. The layers of tissue, on a 2D mammogram, can simulate a lesion, but with 3D it's easier to see if it is really something we need to call patients back to take

Physician Assistant Catherine Gaines



another look at."

Dr. Armani said the 3D-guided biopsies on the new machine will also allow the procedure to be done in less time and with less radiation.

"Along with the chair that replaced the old-fashioned table, the patient does not have to do anything throughout the biopsy procedure as the machine moves around the breast," Dr. Armani said.

To schedule a screening 3D mammogram at SeRA, which is located at 209 W. 27th St., Lumberton, call 910-671-4000.



The SmartCurve™ system uses a curved surface and is clinically proven to deliver a more comfortable mammogram.



Radiologist Dr. Sam Armani

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Understanding inflammatory breast cancer

Many women know that a lump, pain or some other abnormality in the breast may be indicative of breast cancer. But a rash, redness or swelling may also be linked to a rare form of breast cancer known as inflammatory breast cancer.

Inflammatory breast cancer, or IBC, accounts for roughly 1 to 5 percent of all breast cancers in the United States. The symptoms of IBC can differ from symptoms of other forms of breast cancer, and a rash-like appearance may be part of it, according to Healthline.

The National Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc., says IBC is a fast-growing breast cancer that infiltrates the skin and lymph vessels of the breast. When IBC is present, no distinct tumor or lump can be felt and isolated in the breast. Instead, earlier symptoms include the appearance of a rash or small irritation

that may be mistaken for an insect bite. Over time, the irritation can become more red, swollen and warm. Other changes to the breast skin may occur, including nipple inversion or flattening, a pitted appearance to the skin or dimpling. This dimpling is caused by a buildup of fluid in the breast that's due to cancer cells blocking the lymph vessels. This prevents the fluid from draining normally.

IBC is a very fast-moving cancer. By the time symptoms are discovered, IBC may already have advanced to Stage 3, necessitating aggressive treatment. This usually includes a combination of surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, and hormone treatments.

Breast cancer comes in many different forms and can present in various ways. Never overlook any abnormality on or around the breast.





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Breast cancer survival rates soar

A breast cancer diagnosis can be a devastating blow. Upon receiving such a diagnosis, people may begin to ask questions about treatment and the impact cancer may have on their personal lives. Many people who are

diagnosed with cancer also begin to wonder about their mortality.

An estimated 266,120 new cases of invasive breast cancer and 63,960 new cases of non-invasive, or in situ, breast cancer are expected to

be diagnosed among women in the United States this year, according to Breastcancer.org. According to the latest statistics presented by the Canadian Breast Cancer foundation, 26,300 women and 230 men had been diagnosed with breast cancer in Canada in 2017.

The good news is that breast cancer incidence rates began decreasing in 2000 after increasing for the previous two decades. In addition, death rates from breast cancer have been decreasingly steadily since 1989.

The National Cancer Institute says that the change in age-adjusted mortality rates are an indicator of

the progress being made in the fight against breast cancer. The most recent SEER Cancer Statistics Review released in April 2018 indicates cancer death rates among women decreased by 1.4 percent per year between the years of 2006 and 2015. The American Cancer Society says that decreasing death rates among major cancer types, including prostate, colorectal, lung, and breast cancers, are driving the overall shift in survival. The ACS says breast cancer death rates among women declined by 39 percent from 1989 to 2015. That progress is attributed to improvements in early detection and treatment protocols. For anyone doing the math, over the

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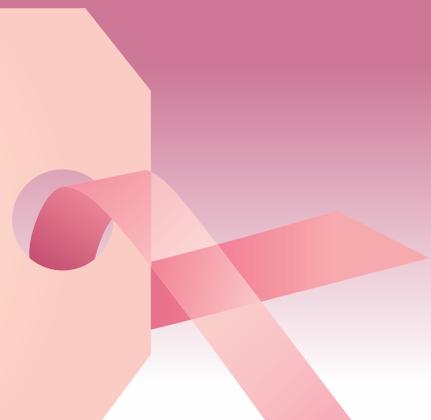
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BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH





Continued from page 8

last 25 years or so, 322,000 lives have been saved from breast cancer.

A similar scenario has unfolded in Canada. Breast cancer mortality rates in Canada recently decreased to 21.4 percent, down from 21.8 percent in 2011, states data from the Canadian Cancer Society. Currently, the five-year survival rate for breast cancer among Canadians

is 87 percent, and the five-year net survival in the United States is 85 percent.

Increased knowledge about breast cancer, early detection through examinations and mammography and improved treatments are helping to drive up the survival rates of breast cancer. Although this does not make diagnosis any less scary, it does offer hope to those recently diagnosed.

Determining breast cancer stage

When receiving treatment for breast cancer, women will learn about cancer staging. According to the nonprofit organization Breastcancer.org, determining the stage of the cancer helps patients and their doctors figure out the prognosis, develop a treatment plan and even decide if clinical trials are a valid option.

Typically expressed as a number on a scale of 0 through IV, breast cancer stage is determined after careful consideration of a host of factors. The staging system, sometimes referred to as the TNM system, is overseen by the American Joint Committee on Cancer and ensures that all instances of breast cancer are described in a uniform way. This helps to compare treatment results and gives doctors and patients a better understanding of breast cancer and the ways to treat it.

Breastcancer.org notes that the TNM system was updated in 2018, but before then was based on three clinical characteristics:

- **T:** the size of the tumor and whether or not it has grown into nearby tissue
- **N:** whether the cancer is present in the lymph nodes
- **M:** whether the cancer has metastasized, or spread to other parts of the body beyond the breast

While each of those factors is still considered when determining breast cancer stage, starting in 2018, the AJCC added additional characteristics to its staging guidelines, which make staging more complex but also more accurate.

- **Tumor grade:** This is a measurement of how much the cancer cells look like normal cells.
- **Estrogen- and progesterone-receptor status:** This indicates if the cancer cells have receptors for the hormones estrogen and progesterone. If cancer cells are deemed estrogen-receptor-positive, then they may receive signals from estrogen that promote their growth. Similarly, those deemed progesterone-receptor-positive may receive signals from progesterone that could promote their growth. Testing for hormone receptors, which roughly two out of three breast cancers are positive for, helps doctors determine if the cancer will respond to hormonal therapy or other treatments. Hormone-receptor-positive cancers may be treatable with medications that reduce hormone production or block hormones from supporting the growth and function of cancer cells.
- **HER2 status:** This helps doctors determine if the cancer cells are making too much of the HER2 protein. HER2 proteins are receptors on breast cells made by the HER2 gene. In about 25 percent of breast cancers, the HER2 gene



makes too many copies of itself, and these extra genes ultimately make breast cells grow and divide in ways that are uncontrollable. HER2-positive breast cancers are more likely to spread and return than those that are HER2-negative.

- **Oncotype DX score:** The oncotype DX score helps doctors determine a woman's risk of early-stage, estrogen-receptor positive breast cancer recurring and how likely she is to benefit from post-surgery chemotherapy. In addition, the score helps doctors figure out if a woman is at risk of ductal carcinoma in situ recurring and/or at risk for a new invasive cancer developing in the same breast. The score also helps doctors figure out if such women will benefit from radiation therapy or DCIS surgery.

Determining breast cancer stage is a complex process, but one that can help doctors develop the most effective course of treatment. More information is available at www.breastcancer.org.



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