

Breast Cancer Awareness Month



The month of October is dedicated to raising awareness for breast cancer. While most individuals are aware of the disease, many forget to take the steps to detect breast cancer in its early stages and encourage their friends and family to do the same.

The OccFit solutions team wishes to provide our clients with the information and advice for prevention and detection of breast cancer. We also proudly offer products for those who are undergoing and have completed treatment for breast cancer.

WHAT IS BREAST CANCER?

Breast cancer occurs when cells in the breast tissue divide and grow rapidly. Tumors in the breast tend to grow slowly. By the time a “lump” is large enough to feel, it may have been growing for as long as 8 to 10 years, however some tumors are more aggressive and can grow much faster.

WARNING SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF BREAST CANCER

The warning signs of breast cancer are not the same for all women or all men. The most common signs include:

- A change in appearance or feel of the breast or nipple
- Nipple discharge (rare in men)
- A lump, hard knot or thickening inside the breast or underarm area
- Swelling, warmth, redness or darkening of the breast
- Change in the size or shape of the breast
- Dimpling or puckering of the skin
- Itchy, scaly sore or rash on the nipple
- New pain in the breast that does not go away

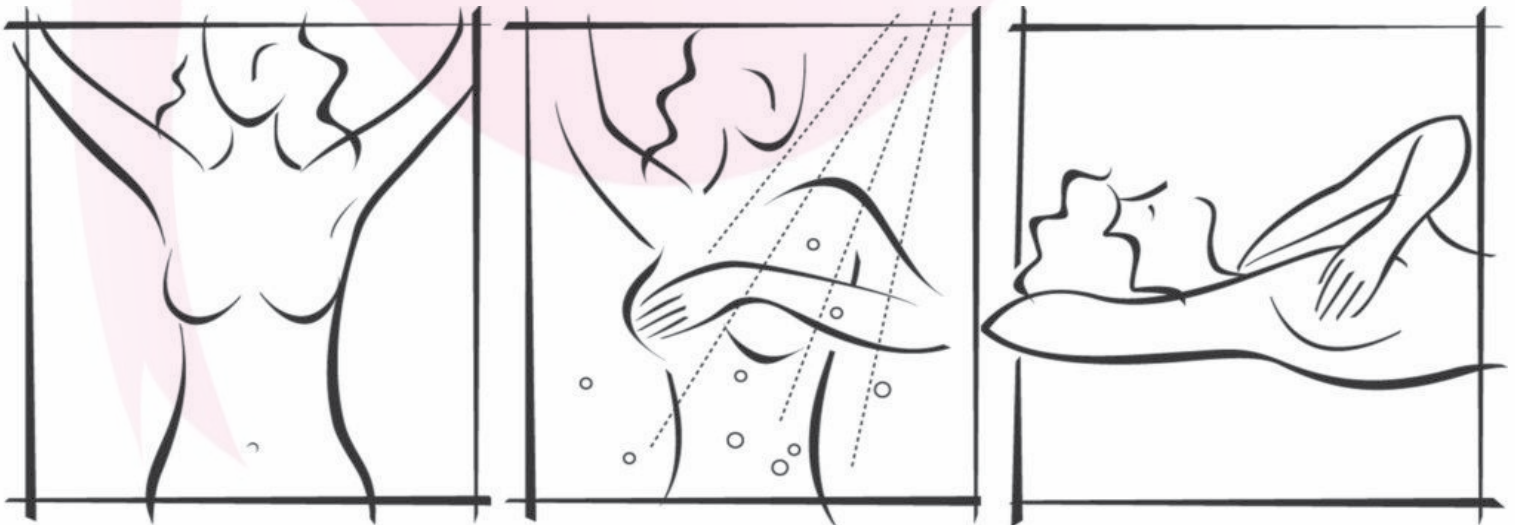


EARLY DETECTION- SELF BREAST EXAMS

When breast cancer is detected early, and is in localized stage, the American Cancer Society reports that the 5-year survival rate is 99%. Adult women are encouraged to perform self-exams at least once a month for early detection.

How should a self-exam be performed?

1. In the Shower
 - a. Use the pads of your 3 middle fingers to press down with light, medium, then firm pressure along the breast and armpit area. Check both breasts each month for any lump, thickening, hardened knot, or any other breast changes.
2. In Front of a Mirror
 - a. Visually inspect your breasts with your arms down by your side, then with your arms raised over your head. Look for any changes in the contour of your breasts, swelling, dimpling of the skin, or changes in the nipples. Next, place your hands on your hip and press firmly to flex your chest muscles. Look for any distinct changes in the breast.
3. Lying Down
 - a. When lying down, the breast tissue spreads out evenly along the chest wall. Women with larger breasts may find that this is an easier way to examine the breasts. Place a pillow under your right shoulder and place your right arm under your head. Use your left hand to press gently on the right breast, covering the entire breast and armpit area. Squeeze the nipple to check for discharge and lumps. Repeat these steps on the left side.



EARLY DETECTION- MAMMOGRAMS

A mammogram is a type of x-ray that examines the breast tissue. Mammograms are often able to show a breast lump before it can even be felt. They also reveal tiny clusters of calcium (called micro-calcifications). Mammography has been proven to reduce deaths due to breast cancer in women screens beginning at age 40. Further tests are needed to find out if the cells present are cancerous or non-cancerous.

Recommendations for all women:

- Women 40 years or older should have mammograms every 1 or 2 years.
- Women under the age of 40 and have risk factors for breast cancer should ask their healthcare professional whether mammograms are advisable and how often to have them.
- For women who have “dense” breast tissue (prevalent in young women), adding a screening ultrasound after a mammogram can help to reveal breast cancer which can be hidden by dense tissue.

IF YOU FIND A LUMP

If you feel a lump in your breast, try not to panic. Most lumps are benign (non-cancerous). Some lumps disappear on their own. In younger women, lumps are often associated to menstrual periods and go away by the end of the cycle. However, if you find a lump or any change in your breast, nipple or underarm area, see your health care provider to be sure it is not breast cancer.

WHAT CAN I DO TO REDUCE MY RISK?

- Limit your alcohol intake. The more alcohol you drink, the greater your risk of developing breast cancer. Scientists suggest limiting yourself to one drink a day.
- Control your weight. Being overweight or obese increases your risk of breast cancer, especially if obesity occurs after menopause.
- Physical activity can prevent breast cancer by helping maintain a healthy weight. Try to perform moderate aerobic activity for at least 150 minutes or vigorous aerobic activity for 75 minutes. Also, try to incorporate strength training activities at least twice a week.
- Don't smoke. Research shows that smoking is associated with breast cancer, especially in premenopausal women.
- Limit dose and duration of hormone therapy. Your risk of breast cancer can increase if you use combination hormone therapy. If you are taking hormone therapy to reduce menopausal symptoms, ask your doctor about other non-hormonal options or lowering your dosage.
- Breast feed. The longer you breast feed, the greater protection you have from breast cancer.
- Avoid exposure to radiation and environmental pollution. Some medical imaging methods use high levels of radiation. Reduce your exposure by having these tests performed only when it is absolutely necessary.