

Breast Cancer

No one is exempt, affects women and men.



October-2015

October has arrived!

October has been identified as the month for Breast Cancer prevention. During this month many activities are performed to promote awareness about early detection and the importance of health education about this disease.

Breast Cancer is the uncontrolled growth of cells located in the chest area, specifically in breast tissue. Cancer seems to occur when the genetic material of a cell changes causing the cells to grow very fast and to die in an abnormal way. Currently the most common diagnosis is ductal carcinoma (in the milk ducts), even though the lobular carcinoma may occur and, in rare cases, cancer can start in other breast areas.

In Puerto Rico, according to the Central Cancer Registry's bulletin, published in 2013, between the period of 2005 to 2010, the highest incidence of cancer for women among all types was breast cancer, with a 30.2% of a sample of 34,775 women. The men are not exempt from having this disease, although is less common in men than in women.

Men have breast tissue which puts them at risk of developing it. In the United States, two thousand men are diagnosed with breast cancer, from which 400 die of the disease. Therefore, we invite men to educate themselves about this disease that manifests, detects and treats in the same way that in woman.

Risk factors



Los factores de riesgo:

- Age
- Family history of breast cancer (mother, sister or daughter)
- Late menopause (women after age 55)
- Women who have never had children or who had their first child after 30 years of age
- Previous biopsies
- Overweight
- Alcohol intake

Signs and Symptoms

The warning signs and symptoms can be different for each person. It is even possible that some people do not feel any.

- New bump in the breast or under the arm (armpit).
- Hardening or inflammation in part of the breasts.
- Irritation or scaling of the skin of the breast.
- Redness or scaling in the nipple or the breasts.
- Sinking nipple or pain in that area.
- Nipple discharge other than breast milk, including blood.
- Any change in the size or shape of the breasts.
- Pain in any part of the breast.

Screening

The early detection can make a difference. It is very important to performed screening tests to detect cancer cells before they can manifest symptoms. Different tests are:

Clinical Exam

Routine test that can be performed by a doctor or nurse. The procedure consists of palpating the breast and adjacent areas. It may be done in your routine health visits or every three years, from the age of 20 years.

Mammography

X-ray of low intensity that is recommended for women every two years between the ages of 40-49 years. For those between 50-74 years, annual mammogram is recommended.

Mammography's Myths and Facts

Myth: Mammography is very painful.

Fact: There are only minutes of discomfort due to the compression of the breast, but it should not be painful.

Myth: Radiation causes damage and can even cause cancer.

Fact: The radiation is minimal and harmless.

Myth: There are other effective methods of early detection of breast cancer.

Fact: Mammography is the only method to detect breast cancer early.

Myth: There is no need for a mammography unless a lump or symptom of breast cancer is felt.

Fact: Screening mammograms are for women and men without lumps or other symptoms. The best time to detect breast cancer is before it can be felt.

Myth: If a woman or man performs regularly a breast self-exam, there is no need for a mammogram.

Fact: Although breast self-examination can help to detect a lump, mammography can detect it up to 2 years before it can be felt.

Myth: Mammograms are expensive and health insurance does not cover them.

Fact: Most public and private health insurance plan an have coverage for this screening test.

Myth: My mother and my grandmother never had breast cancer, so I have no reason to worry about a mammogram.

Fact: Being female and getting old are risks for developing breast cancer. Eighty percent (80%) of women with breast cancer have no family history of the disease.

Treatment

There are different methods for treating breast cancer. The selection of a treatment above another will depend on several factors:

- Cancer Stage - the size of the tumor and whether it is in the breast or has spread to lymph nodes or other body parts.
- The type of cancer
- The speed with which the tumor grows.
- The likelihood that the tumor regrows.
- Woman's age
- The overall health status
- Menopausal status (whether a woman still has menstrual periods).
- If cancer was recently diagnosed or if it relapsed.



Main treatments for breast cancer

Surgery

If the doctor finds something suspicious on an imaging study, he or she will order a biopsy to check for cancer cells in the breast tissue. According to the findings and evaluation, a breast-conserving surgery (lumpectomy) can be performed to conserve the breast or a radical mastectomy to remove it completely.

Radiotherapy

There are two types of radiation: internal and external. In external radiation, it is emitted from a machine outside the body that focuses on the affected area. In internal radiation, also known as brachytherapy, a small radioactive implants (seeds) are placed in the area where the cancer has been detected.

Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy refers to cancer treatment based on drugs administered orally or intravenously (through

a vein). It is given in cycles, meaning that after each treatment period, there should be a recovery time.

Hormonal Therapy

This therapy involves using medicines to treat cancer that has spread or recurred after treatment. Most types of hormone therapy estrogen levels decrease or prevent estrogen from acting on breast cancer cells.

Targeted Therapy

Is the use of drugs to fight specifically genetic mutation that cause cancer in breast cells.

Targeted therapy to bone

When breast cancer spreads to the bones, certain drugs are used to help reduce pain and prevent fractures.

Prevention



Some recommendations that help reduced the probability of a diagnosis are:

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Avoid alcohol consumption.
- Exercise for four hours or more per week.
- Avoid exposure to chemicals that can cause cancer (carcinogens).
- Reduce radiation exposure.
- Talk with your doctor about any hormonal treatment.
- If any sign or symptom is felt during a self-breast examination, visit the doctor immediately. This test is recommended monthly, and in the case of women, preferably after menstruation.
- Identify family history of breast cancer (mutation in the BRCA 1 and BRCA 2 genes).
- Evaluate with your doctor the following ways to reduce risk:
 - antiestrogens or other drugs that prevent or lower the estrogen in the body
 - surgery to reduce the risk of breast cancer (for women there is mastectomy or removal of the ovaries and fallopian tubes)

Special events of breast cancer awareness and education



Different organizations unite to conduct activities focused on educating about the disease and the importance of screening test.

RACE for the Cure

The funds raised are designated to promote breast cancer screening and treatment for patients with this disease.

Event held every year by the **Susan G. Komen Organization**. This event consists of a 5k race and various activities for the whole family.

The American Cancer Society will perform different activities during the month oriented to educating women and their families about breast cancer. In addition, funds will be raised to pay for mammograms and provide other services to the community through their patient support program. For more information you can contact them at (787) 764-2295.

Join these initiatives and you will be supporting efforts to reduce breast cancer in Puerto Rico!

References

<http://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/seno>
<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/spanish/ency/article/001289.htm>
http://www.estadisticas.gobierno.pr/iepr/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=XNd4xX_dMjg%3D&tabid=186
<http://www.cancer.org/espanol/cancer/cancerdeseno-tratamiento-informacion-general>
<http://www.who.int/topics/cancer/breastcancer/es/index3.htm>
http://www.cdc.gov/spanish/cancer/breast/basic_info/prevention.htm

For more information about breast cancer, you can contact the Health Education Unit at 787-277-6571.



Federal Employee Health Benefit Program