

October: Breast Cancer Awareness

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month



October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, which is a good reminder to everyone (women and men) to take stock of your health. Early detection is key to increasing your chance of surviving cancer. If you are female, have you had a breast exam or women's wellness exam in the past 12 months? If you are over 40, a mammogram is recommended every 1-2 years depending on your health and family history.

While you can't necessarily change the genetic factors that might predispose you to breast cancer (gender, age, family history, etc.), you can do something about some of the environmental factors that contribute to your risk. Here is a list of suggestions on how to reduce your chances of getting breast cancer by addressing your environment:

- **Let's get physical!** Studies show that a sedentary lifestyle increases your risk of getting breast cancer, so try to sit a little less and move a little more. You don't have to be a marathon runner to see the benefits—walking, gardening, and even housecleaning can help keep you moving.
- **Eat your vegetables (and fruits)!** A diet that is higher in saturated fats and lower in fresh fruits and vegetables also increases your risk of breast cancer. Aim to get at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day. If that seems difficult, try to add in just one extra serving per week until you get to five
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Many of us could stand to lose some weight, and here's one more reason to do so: being overweight or obese can increase your breast cancer risk, especially after menopause. Talk to your doctor about starting a weight loss program if you wish to lose weight.
- **Watch your alcohol consumption.** Excess alcohol is associated with a higher risk of breast cancer. The risk increases with the amount of alcohol consumed. For women, limit yourself to one drink a day.
- **Assess your Combined Hormone Replacement Therapy.** Taking combined hormone replacement therapy (HRT) for menopause not only can increase your risk for getting breast cancer, it can also increase the likelihood that the cancer will not be detected until a later stage. If you are concerned, talk with your doctor about your options.
- **Finally, tell everyone you can about Breast Cancer Awareness Month!** Remind your loved ones to get their yearly breast exams as well. Your friends and family are just as busy as you are, and it's easy to forget about these

tasks that you only need to do once a year. Even mentioning that you scheduled your own exam might prompt someone to schedule her own!

Visit www.nationalbreastcancer.org for more information and resources.