



Special points to remember:

- More women die from lung cancer than from breast cancer. But, breast cancer is the most common cancer in women.
- Nearly 200 thousand women and almost 2 thousand men are diagnosed with breast cancer each year. About 40 thousand women die from breast cancer annually.
- Overall, the chance of surviving breast cancer for longer than five years is 80%.

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Every 13 minutes, a woman dies of breast cancer.
Have you (and/or the women in your life) had a mammogram recently?

A Breast Cancer Fact Sheet

Just for You from In the Know!



WHO IS AT RISK FOR BREAST CANCER?

Because the exact cause of breast cancer is still unknown, there are no sure ways to prevent it. This means that all women are at risk for developing the disease.

However, certain factors increase a woman's risk of breast cancer, including:

- **Age:** Most breast cancer cases occur in women over the age of 50 and the risk is especially high for women over age 60.
- **Family History:** Being a close blood relative of someone with breast cancer increases the risk.
- **Reproductive History:** For example, the risk increases for women who started their menstrual periods before age 12, developed menopause after age 55, were never pregnant or had their first child after age 30.
- **Lifestyle:** Certain lifestyle choices increase the risk for breast cancer, including:
 - A high fat diet
 - Two or more alcoholic drinks per day
 - Obesity
 - Lack of exercise

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF BREAST CANCER?

Typically, early breast cancer does not cause any symptoms or pain. However, as the cancer grows, it can cause changes, including:

- Any new lump or thickening in or near the breast or underarm area that feels different than the surrounding tissue
- A change in the breast size or shape
- Dimpling or puckering of the breast skin
- Pulling in or puckering of the nipple
- Swelling, redness or warmth that does not go away
- Pain or tenderness in one spot that does not change during the monthly cycle
- A new, sudden nipple discharge that appears only in one breast
- An itchy, sore, or scaly area on one nipple

CARING FOR A CLIENT ON CHEMOTHERAPY

"Chemo" is used to kill cancer cells that have metastasized throughout the body—meaning they have moved away from the original site of the cancer.

- Chemotherapy weakens a person's ability to fight off infection. Remember that handwashing is the best way to stop the spread of germs! In addition, your client may be told to wear a mask when among a crowd of people. **IMPORTANT:** If you feel sick, wear a mask and gloves...or don't work with clients on chemo!
- Don't assume that every client will have severe side effects from treatment—some people don't. (Although worrying about the effects of "chemo" can make the situation worse.)
- Skin problems may occur so provide a bath or encourage the client to bathe daily, using mild soap and lotions.
- The nails require extra attention as they may darken or become brittle. Follow your workplace policy regarding nail care.

- Mouth care is extremely important during chemotherapy. Soft toothbrushes help prevent gum damage. Keeping the mouth moist may be a challenge. Try offering lollipops, ice chips and Popsicles.
- Hair care should be done delicately. Use only mild shampoos and soft brushes. Gently towel dry the hair—avoid using a hair dryer.
- Encourage your clients to eat high protein and/or high calorie foods when able. Eggs, milkshakes and supplements like Ensure are examples.
- Offer frequent small snacks—during the time of day your clients feel their best. Keep non perishable snacks at the bedside. This is a time when "crackers in bed" are OK!

The National Cancer Institute estimates that one out of every eight American women will get breast cancer.

MORE CARE TIPS FOR YOUR CLIENTS WITH BREAST CANCER

- Encourage self care. Clients under stress often lose interest in everyday activities—even if they are capable of performing them. They may welcome the opportunity to still "be in control".
- Get them outside if they can go. Daylight will help relieve feelings of sadness. If they can't go out, open the curtains.
- Give extra attention to grooming. Breast surgery can affect how a woman feels about her body. Lending a hand to "do" her hair or help her with make-up may mean a great deal.
- The affected side of her body is more vulnerable to infection due to decreased lymph flow. Any small cut, such as a paper cut, can cause an infection. Even many



Listen when your clients express their emotions. Listening is a powerful way to help them feel better.

years "post-op", a woman must be careful with that arm/hand. Any swelling or change in sensation must be reported immediately.

- Never take a blood pressure on the side where a woman has had breast surgery!