

Benign Breast health issues

MYTHS & FACTS

The aim of this article is to empower the readership about the common Myths and evidence based Facts relating to various aspects of Breast health.

MYTH

- Most breast lumps are cancers

FACT

- 9 out of 10 breast lumps are not cancers. However, it is vitally important to investigate the breast lump by way of Triple assessment (Clinical Breast Examination by a Specialist, Bilateral Mammogram and Ultrasound guided core needle biopsy) in order to obtain a definitive diagnosis.
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MYTH

- Breast cancer affects only older women

FACT

- Although majority of breast cancers occur in women over the age of 50 in the western world, it can in fact occur at any age. It is alarming to note that majority of breast cancers in India are diagnosed at a much earlier age in India (< 50 years).
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MYTH

- Breast cancer does not occur in men

FACT

- Many people are unaware that men can develop breast cancer because they do not think men have breasts. In fact, both men and women have breast tissue. It is important to be aware that a small proportion of men do get breast cancer each year. Although precise statistics in India are unknown, approximately 300 new cases of breast cancer are diagnosed in men each year in the United Kingdom (approximately 1% of breast cancers)

MYTH

- We know what causes breast cancer

FACT

- We do not know what causes breast cancer. There are however well recognized risk factors. Being a woman and increasing age are the two most important factors

Other known risk factors are:

- Previously diagnosed breast cancer in the same or other breast
- Strong Family history of breast cancer (close relatives with breast cancer)
- Early onset of menstrual period (before age 12)
- Late menopause (after age 55)
- Not having children and having first child after age 30
- Long term use of Hormone replacement therapy
- Obesity (overweight particularly after menopause)

MYTH

- If you have a risk factor for getting breast cancer, you are likely to get the disease

FACT

- The risk of getting breast cancer is not a certainty, even if you have one of the strongest risk factors

MYTH

- Family history of breast cancer is the most important risk factor for getting breast cancer

FACT

- The vast majority of women with breast cancer do not have a family history of breast cancer. Strong family history (genetic predisposition) accounts for only 5-10% of breast cancers. Those found to be positive for faulty genes (BRCA1 & BRCA2) have significant lifetime risk of getting breast cancer. Not everyone who has BRACA positivity gets breast cancer. The test should **ONLY BE CONSIDERED** when there is a significant family history of breast cancer (HIGH RISK GROUP) and that too **ONLY** after adequate genetic Counseling. Significant family history of breast cancer includes (High risk group)

- One or more close relatives who have had breast cancer before the age of 40
 - Two or more close relatives who have had breast cancer at any age
 - Close relatives who have had breast cancer and others who have had ovarian cancer
 - One close relative who has had breast cancer in both breasts (bilateral) or who has had breast and ovarian cancer
 - Male relative who's had breast cancer
 - An ethnic background where faulty breast cancer genes are more common – for example, people with Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry
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MYTH

Breast cancer screening is effective in all age groups

FACT

Whilst it is important for women of all ages to be 'Breast Aware', Breast Screening is effective only in women over the age of 40 years. Routine breast screening for women under 40 and without symptoms is not effective.

MYTH

Mammography is painful

FACT

Whilst Mammography may cause momentary discomfort, it is not painful.

MYTH

Mammography is not safe. It causes radiation hazard.

FACT

Mammography involves a tiny dose of radiation – the risk to health from this is insignificant. The radiation dose delivered during Mammography is same as receiving a dental X ray.

MYTH

There is not much difference between Conventional Mammogram & Full field digital mammogram

FACT

Full Field Digital Mammography has revolutionized early detection of breast cancer. Its major advantages are less radiation, less discomfort and most importantly superior accuracy particularly in young women with dense breasts in detecting early subtle changes of Breast cancer

MYTH

Breast screening prevents breast cancer

FACT

No, breast screening only helps find breast cancer if it already there

MYTH

Breast feeding prevents breast cancer

FACT

Breast feeding does not prevent breast cancer, but reduces the risk

MYTH

Birth control pills causes Breast cancer

FACT

Modern day birth control pills contain a low dose of oestrogen and progesterone & hence are not associated with an increased risk of getting breast cancer

MYTH

Injury to the Breast can cause breast cancer

FACT

Injury to the breast does not cause breast cancer

MYTH

Breast self examination is no different from Breast Awareness

FACT

Breast self examination (BSE) is a regular & repetitive monthly self examination of the breast performed by a woman at the same time each month to a set method. The concept of BSE has not proven to be beneficial.

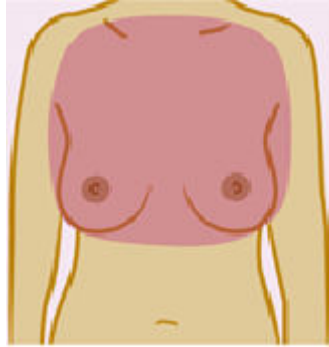
Breast Awareness is about becoming familiar with the breasts and the way they change throughout a woman's life. It is a concept that encourages women to know how their breasts look and feel normally so that they gain confidence about noticing any change which might help detect breast cancer early.

BREAST AWARENESS, as a concept, is gaining increasing acceptance world over.

Check all parts of your breasts, your armpits and up to your collarbone for changes.

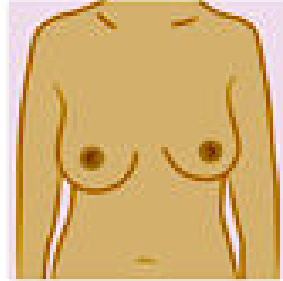
What changes should I be aware of?

You need to be aware of any changes that are new or different for you, such as:



Courtesy: Breast Cancer Care, UK

- a change in size-it may be that one breast has become noticeably larger or noticeably lower



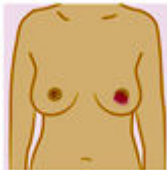
Courtesy: Breast Cancer Care, UK

- a nipple has become inverted (pulled in) or changed its position or shape



Courtesy: Breast Cancer Care, UK

- a rash on or around the nipple



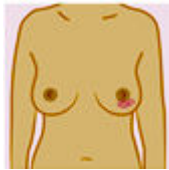
Courtesy: Breast Cancer Care, UK

- discharge from one or both nipples



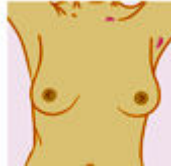
Courtesy: Breast Cancer Care, UK

- puckering or dimpling of the skin



Courtesy: Breast Cancer Care, UK

- a swelling under your armpit or around your collarbone (where the lymph nodes are)



Courtesy: Breast Cancer Care, UK

- a lump or thickening in your breast that feels different from the rest of the breast tissue



Courtesy: Breast Cancer Care, UK

- Constant pain in one part of your breast or in your armpit.



Courtesy: Breast Cancer Care, UK

Breast Awareness 5 Point Code

1. Know what is normal for you
2. Know what changes to look & feel for
3. Look and feel
4. Report any changes to your Doctor without delay
5. Have a screening Mammogram (X- ray of the breast) every year if you are aged 40 and over