

Women's Health **UPDATE**

Breast Cancer Myths And Tips

(NAPSA)—The U.S. Centers for Disease Control reports that in the United States the incidence of breast cancer has decreased significantly in recent years.

Nevertheless, more than 184,000 Americans will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year, according to the American Cancer Society. And although family history does play a factor, the two largest risk factors for breast cancer are simply being a woman and getting older.

"Many people think they aren't at risk for breast cancer if a family member has never been diagnosed," said Margaret C. Kirk, CEO, Breast Cancer Network of Strength (formerly Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization). "Arming yourself with facts and information is the key to understanding and facing this disease that could affect one in eight American women."

Questions about breast cancer and breast health can be answered by Breast Cancer Network of Strength's "YourShoes" 24/7 Breast Cancer Support Center, which includes the country's only 24-hour toll-free hotline staffed by breast cancer survivors. Peer counselors provide callers with immediate information on topics ranging from risk factors and treatment options to breast health safety tips and support groups.

Breast Cancer Risk Factors

- **Gender.** Being a woman is the biggest risk factor for breast cancer.

- **Ageing.** The majority of all breast cancer diagnoses are in women over age 50.

- **Family History.** Less than 10 percent of breast cancer cases are genetically inherited, according to the American Cancer Society.



Calls are answered 24 hours a day at Breast Cancer Network of Strength.

- **Personal History of Breast Cancer.** A woman with cancer in one breast has a three- to fourfold increased risk of developing a new cancer in the other breast or in another part of the same breast.

- **Race.** Caucasian women are slightly more likely to develop breast cancer than African-American women, yet African-American women are more likely to die from the disease. More Caucasian women will develop breast cancer and die from the disease than Asian American, Pacific Islander, American Indian, Alaska Native or Hispanic/Latino women.

- **Previous Breast Radiation.** Women who as children or young adults have had radiation therapy to the chest area as treatment for another cancer (such as Hodgkin's disease or non-Hodgkin's lymphoma) have a significantly increased risk for breast cancer.

Other risk factors include previous abnormal breast biopsy, early onset of menstrual period (before age 12), late onset of menopause (after age 55), age at first full-term pregnancy, and use of diethylstilbestrol (DES) during pregnancy. Some lifestyle factors

that could affect breast cancer risk include being overweight, using hormone replacement therapy and alcohol consumption.

Breast Cancer Network of Strength recommends a three-pronged approach to maximize breast health that includes breast mammography, clinical breast exams and self breast exams.

Get A Routine Mammogram

Breast Cancer Network of Strength recommends that women begin annual mammography screening at age 40. Women who have a family history of breast cancer or other concerns about their personal risk should consult a medical professional about when to begin mammography.

See Your Medical Professional On A Regular Basis

A clinical breast examination should be part of your routine checkup. Beginning at age 20, women should have a clinical breast examination every two to three years. Women age 40 and older should have an annual breast examination.

Perform A Monthly Breast Self-Examination

Understanding the geography of your breast is critical to performing a self-exam properly. The "ABC's" of performing a self-exam are checking the entire area enclosed by the Armpit, Bra line and Collarbone for lumps and changes in breast tissue. If you find something unusual, have a doctor check it. A lump should never be ignored.

For more information about Breast Cancer Network of Strength or to ask questions via e-mail, visit www.networkofstrength.org. Peer counselors can also be contacted 24 hours a day at (800) 221-2141, with interpreters available in 150 languages.