

Women's Health **UPDATE**

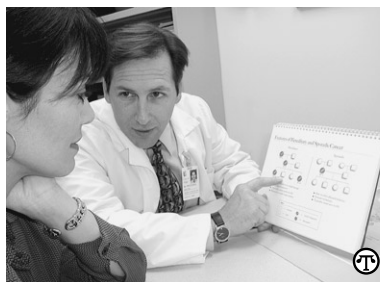
Taking Steps In The Fight Against Breast Cancer

(NAPSA)—Today, 2.6 million women have breast cancer—and *half* do not even know it. In the battle against breast cancer, a woman's chances for survival depend largely on early detection and treatment. When breast cancer is detected in its early stages, more than 90 percent of patients can be cured. What steps can you take to safeguard your health?

First, make sure you know your family medical history for both maternal and paternal relatives. It can help cut your risk for developing breast cancer. If you do have a family history of breast cancer, you may benefit from genetic counseling and testing. According to Jeffrey Weitzel, MD, director of the Department of Clinical Cancer Genetics at City of Hope Cancer Center in Los Angeles, "Women known to be at high risk of breast cancer can benefit from customized early-detection screening and prevention techniques." Discuss the findings from your health history with your physician, who can help you craft appropriate prevention and screening strategies.

Second, know your personal medical history. Medical experts cite the following potential risk factors for breast cancer:

- Being childless, or having your first child after age 30;



You can save a life—your own.

- Having a long menstrual history—began your menses at an early age and ending late in life;
- Consuming, on average, two or more alcoholic drinks each day;
- Considerable exposure to radiation, particularly to the chest;
- Exposure to supplemental hormones including birth control pills, DES and hormone replacement therapy.

Women with any of these risk factors should be vigilant about their cancer screening.

Finally, age itself is a woman's single most important risk factor. According to American Cancer Society research, among 20 year olds, only one in 2,187 will develop breast cancer in the next ten years; among 40 year olds, one in 67, and among 60 year olds, one in 29. For this reason alone,

women over 40 should have an annual mammogram.

How can you protect yourself, especially if you face some of the factors that put you into the higher-risk group? See your doctor. He or she will inform you of the latest methods of managing your risk, including instruction on how to perform a monthly breast self-exam, conduct annual check-ups including a clinical breast examination and, if you are over 40, give you a prescription for a mammogram every year. Your physician may also put you on a more comprehensive prevention or screening program depending upon your health histories.

You may also be told to lose weight, exercise more, and cut down on your alcohol intake—all positive measures toward preventing breast cancer and many other illnesses. One way to take direct action in the fight against breast cancer as well as fund breast cancer research is to participate in City of Hope's **WALK FOR HOPE AGAINST BREAST CANCER**. To make a donation or to register to walk or run, call 800-266-7920, or go to the Walk Web site at www.walk.coh.org. To learn more about genetic screening for breast cancer, breast self-examination, or other cancer concerns, call City of Hope at 800-826-HOPE.