



OCTOBER IS BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Over the course of a lifetime, 1 in 8 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer. The American Cancer Society estimates that there will be 226,870 new cases and 39,510 deaths from invasive breast cancer among women in the United States in 2012.ⁱ

Disparities

Breast cancer continues to be a leading cause of cancer mortality and morbidity for all women regardless of race, however significant disparities in incidence and mortality rates are present. In Los Angeles County, white followed by black women have the highest incidence of invasive breast cancer (152.6 and 126.4 per 100,000 female population respectively). Black women have the highest mortality rate at 36.6 per 100,000 female population compared to 22.9 per 100,000 female population for women overall.ⁱⁱ

Risk Factors

In addition to gender and age, genetic factors, breast density, use of combined hormone therapy, radiation exposure, obesity and alcohol use are all risk factors for breast cancer. However, many women with breast cancer have no apparent risk factors. Even when a woman with risk factors develops breast cancer, it is hard to know how much these factors may have contributed to her cancer.

Screening Guidelines

Early detection of breast cancer is important for reducing mortality rates. Studies show that screening with mammography reduces mortality rates by 15 to 25 percent.ⁱⁱⁱ Screening mammography is also associated with potential harms, including over-diagnosis and false-positive results that can result in unnecessary additional imaging and biopsy procedures. In balancing the harms and benefits of mammography, new guidelines by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) were released in 2009.ⁱⁱⁱ

Recommendations for screening mammography are as follows:

- i) Women 40-49 years: should talk with their healthcare provider about when to start having mammograms and how often; factors to consider include risk factors and personal values regarding specific benefits and harms of screening
- ii) Women 50-74 years: should have a mammogram every 2 years
- iii) Women 75 years and older: should talk with their healthcare provider.

Prevention Measures

To reduce the risk of breast cancer, women should talk to their healthcare provider to determine the best personalized preventive strategy. All women would benefit from modifying controllable risk factors such as limiting alcohol intake, exercising, and staying at a healthy weight.

BE ACTIVE, EAT SMART, QUIT SMOKING, GET CHECKED! *Prevention Matters!*

ⁱ American Cancer Society <http://www.cancer.org/Cancer/BreastCancer/DetailedGuide/breast-cancer-risk-factors>

ⁱⁱ Liu L, Zhang J, Deapen D. *Cancer in Los Angeles County: Incidence and Mortality by Race/Ethnicity 1988-2009*. Los Angeles County Cancer Surveillance Program, University of Southern California, 2011.

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Preventive Services Task Force – Screening for Breast Cancer
<http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf/uspstfbrca.htm>