



SOUTH CAROLINA FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS
Affiliated with National Volunteer Outreach Network, Country Women's Council, U.S.A., Associated Country Women of the World and in partnership with Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service
SCFCL website: <http://www.scfcl.com>

Leader Training Guide

Understanding Breast Cancer

Objectives:

1. Participants will learn what breast cancer is and where it starts.
2. Participants will learn the warning signs and risks associated with breast cancer.
3. Participants will learn about treatment options if diagnosed with breast cancer.
4. Participants will learn about breast cancer screenings.

Lesson Overview/Introduction:

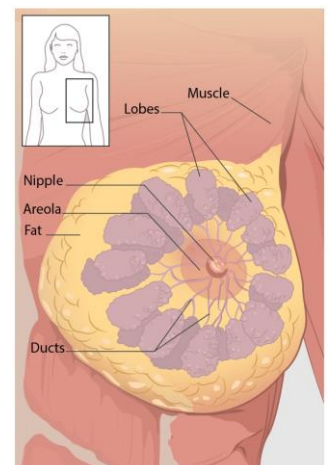
Breast Cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths among women in the United States. Each year more than 240,000 women get breast cancer and more than 40,000 women die from the disease. Many factors increase a woman's chance of developing breast cancer but making healthy lifestyle changes can reduce a woman's chance of developing breast cancer and improve the chances of surviving if cancer occurs. Breast cancer screenings are ways to check a woman's breast for cancer before there are signs and could lead to early detection; which can increase survival rates.

Lesson:

What is Breast Cancer?

Breast cancer starts when cells in the breast begin to grow out of control. These cells usually form a tumor that can often be seen on an x-ray or felt as a lump. The tumor is malignant (cancer) if the cells can grow into (invade) surrounding tissues or spread (metastasize) to distant areas of the body. Breast cancer occurs almost entirely in women, but men can get breast cancer, too.

Breast cancer can begin in different parts of the breast. A breast is made up of three main parts: lobules, ducts, and connective tissue. The lobules are the glands that produce milk. The ducts are tubes that carry milk to the nipple. The connective tissue (which consists of fibrous and fatty tissue) surrounds and holds everything together. Most breast cancers begin in the ducts or lobules.



Warning Signs

Different people have different symptoms of breast cancer and some people do not have any symptoms or signs at all. Some warning signs can include:

- Any change in the size or the shape of the breast
- Pain in any area of the breast.
- Nipple discharge other than breast milk (including blood)
- A new lump in the breast or underarm.
- Irritation or dimpling of breast skin
- Redness or flaky skin in the nipple area on the breast.

Risks

While there are risks that increase a woman's chance of breast cancer such as:

- Age
- Race/Ethnicity
- Long menstrual history
- Having dense breasts
- Having a family history of breast cancer

There are also healthy lifestyle changes that will lower a woman's risk of developing breast cancer and improve the chances of survival if it occurs such as:

- Catching breast problems early by doing a monthly breast-self exam and get a yearly breast exam from your health care provider
- Minimizing alcohol consumption
- Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables; try to limit your saturated fat intake
- Increasing physical activity
- Breastfeeding your baby (if possible)
- Maintaining a healthy weight

Treatment options

Breast cancer is treated in different ways and your doctor and other specialists may recommend the following treatment options:

- Lumpectomy-the surgeon removes the tumor and a small rim of normal tissue around it.
- Mastectomy-the whole breast is removed.
- Radiation Therapy-uses high energy x-rays to kill cancer that may be left after surgery.
- Chemo Therapy-uses drugs to kill cancer cell throughout the body. It is often given in cycles over 3-6 months, with days or weeks off between treatments. This gives your body a chance to recover
- Hormone Therapy-drugs slow or stop the growth of hormone receptor-positive tumors by preventing the cancer cell from getting the hormones they need to grow.
- Target therapy-drugs kill cancer cells with certain markers or portions.

Screenings

Breast cancer screening means checking a woman's breasts for cancer before there are signs or symptoms of the disease.

Monthly breast self-exams, clinical breast exams with your health care provider, and yearly mammograms are all beneficial when detecting cancer.

Early detection is key; if the cancer is located only in the breast, the 5-year relative survival rate of people with breast cancer is 99% and if the cancer has spread to the regional lymph nodes, the 5-year survival rate is 85%.

Lesson Summary:

Breast cancer begins in different parts of the breast and any breast changes should be reported to a health care provider. Although some risk factors cannot be changed, living a healthy lifestyle can reduce a woman's chance of developing breast cancer and can increase survival if diagnosed with cancer. Breast cancer screenings cannot prevent breast cancer, but it can help find breast cancer early, when it is easier to treat.

Suggested Activities:

- Participate in Susan G. Komen walk/race in your area or organize a walk/run in your community
- Wear a pink ribbon each day in October
- Promote breast cancer awareness at work, church, or community center with a program or bulletin board

Suggested Materials:

Visit <https://ww5.komen.org/BreastCancer/KomenEducationalMaterials.html> for handouts on understanding breast cancer.

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Sources/References:

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Breast Cancer Fact Sheet

Breast cancer develops from cells in the breast. The most common sign of breast cancer is a new lump or mass, but most are benign. Other signs include a generalized swelling of part of a breast (even if no lump is felt), skin irritation or dimpling, nipple pain or retraction, redness or scaliness of the nipple or breast skin, or a spontaneous discharge other than breast milk.

Opportunities

Prevention We don't know how to prevent breast cancer, but it's possible for a woman of average risk to reduce her risk of developing the disease. Lifestyle factors, such as reducing alcohol use, breast-feeding, engaging in regular physical activity, and staying at a healthy weight, are all associated with lower risk. Estrogen-blocking drugs, such as tamoxifen and raloxifene, can reduce the risk of developing breast cancer in some high-risk women. Some risk factors can't be changed, such as age, race, family history of disease, and reproductive history.

Detection The earlier breast cancer is found, the better the chances for successful treatment. A mammogram can often show breast changes that may be cancer before physical symptoms develop. For this reason, the American Cancer Society recommends the following guidelines for finding breast cancer early:

- Women ages 40 to 44 should have the choice to start annual breast cancer screening with mammograms if they wish to do so.
- Women ages 45 to 54 should get mammograms every year.
- Women 55 and older should switch to mammograms every 2 years, or can continue yearly screening.
- Screening should continue as long as a woman is in good health and is expected to live 10 more years or longer.
- All women should be familiar with the known benefits, limitations, and potential harms linked to breast cancer screening.
- Screening MRI is recommended for women at high risk of breast cancer, including women with a strong family history of breast or ovarian cancer, those with a lifetime risk of breast cancer of about 20% to 25% or greater according to risk assessment tools that are based mainly on family history, those with a known breast cancer gene mutation, and women who were treated with radiation therapy to the chest when they were between the ages of 10 and 30.

Treatment Treatment is most successful when breast cancer is detected early. Depending on the situation and the patient's choices, treatment may involve breast conservation surgery or mastectomy. In both cases, lymph nodes under the arm may also be removed. Women who have a mastectomy have several options for breast reconstruction.

Other treatments are radiation therapy, chemotherapy, hormone therapy, and monoclonal antibody therapy. Often 2 or more methods are used in combination. Patients should discuss all treatment options with their doctors.

Who is at risk?

Gender Being a woman is the greatest risk factor for breast cancer; however, men also can develop breast cancer.

Age The risk of developing breast cancer increases with age. Most invasive breast cancers are primarily found in women age 50 or older.

Heredity Breast cancer risks are higher among women with a family history of the disease. Having a first-degree relative with breast cancer increases a woman's risk, while having more than one first-degree relative who has or had breast cancer before the age of 40 or in both breasts increases a woman's risk even more. However, it's important to remember that most women with breast cancer don't have a first-degree relative with the disease.

Other risk factors

- Post-menopausal hormone therapy with estrogen and progesterone therapy
- Being overweight or obese, especially after menopause
- Alcohol use
- Physical inactivity
- Long menstrual history
- Never having children or having first live birth after age 30
- Previous history of breast cancer or certain benign breast conditions

Breast cancer in the United States: 2019 estimates

- New cases
 - Women: 268,600
 - Men: 2,670
- Deaths
 - Women: 41,760
 - Men: 500
- 5-year relative survival rate for localized stage: 99%
- 5-year relative survival rate for all stages combined: 92% for white women and 83% for African American women

Quality-of-life issues

From the time of diagnosis, the quality of life for every cancer patient and survivor is affected in some way. They may be affected socially, psychologically, physically, and spiritually.

Concerns that patients and survivors most often express are fear of recurrence; chronic and/or acute pain; sexual problems; fatigue; guilt for delaying screening or treatment, or for doing things that may have caused the cancer; changes in physical appearance; depression; sleep difficulties; changes in what they are able to do after treatment; and the burden on finances and loved ones. Women with breast cancer often feel uncertainty about treatment options and have concerns about their fatigue, sexuality, and body image.

Bottom line

Regular mammograms can help find breast cancer at an early stage, when treatment is most successful. A mammogram can find breast changes that could be cancer years before physical symptoms develop. Some things that may help reduce a woman's risk of getting breast cancer include being physically active, staying at a healthy weight, and limiting alcohol use.

