

# Making Strides Against Cancer



*"Why Me?"  
The Antigua &  
Barbuda Cancer Society*

## "Why Me?" The Antigua & Barbuda Cancer

### WOMEN'S HEALTH

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Do you know the top women's health risks? If you worry excessively about breast or ovarian cancer, your anxiety may be misplaced. Statistically, heart disease may be a more significant health risk for women. Thankfully, healthy lifestyle choices can go along way toward reducing women's health risks.

For some women, breast health tops the list of women's health concerns. What's the best way to do a breast self exam? What should you do if you find a breast lump? What's the best way to treat breast pain?

For others, women's health concerns include cosmetic surgery. And as you get older, your women's health concerns are likely to change. Could bellyfat lead to health problems? Are Kegel exercises (pelvic floor exercise) really necessary? Shouldn't you know the answers to these and other women's health questions?

#### Breast Health

Breast health begins with breast awareness, or a sense of what's normal for your breasts. To promote breast health, do regular breast self exams. With practice, you'll discover how your breasts vary in sensitivity and texture at different times during your menstrual cycle. You'll also learn how breast health changes during various stages of life.

For many women, breast health includes concerns about breast lumps, breast pain or nipple discharge. Know what's normal—and when to consult your doctor. It's also important to understand common screening and diagnostic tests for breast health, such as clinical breast exams, mammograms and breast ultrasounds. If you're thinking about breast augmentation or breast reduction, understand the surgical process—including who's a candidate for surgery, what to expect from the procedure and possible complications.

#### Women's Sexual Health

Women's sexual health is an important aspect of women's health, whether you're trying to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases or you're worried about low sex drive or other women's sexual health problems.

Of course, women's sexual health goes beyond contraception. Learn how to achieve a fulfilling sexual relationship, and know how to protect yourself from sexually transmitted diseases. As you get older, understand common changes in women's sexual health—and how to maintain a healthy and enjoyable sex life at any age.

#### Women's life stages

Women's life stages are based on the reproductive cycle, beginning with menstruation and ending with menopause.

To understand women's life



stages, start with the biology. Every month an egg is released from the ovary during ovulation. It travels down the fallopian tube, where it may be fertilized by a sperm. If fertilized, it implants in the lining of the uterus. If perimenopause—the time when a woman's body begins the natural transition to menopause.

Women's life stages are often marked by specific signs and symptoms, such as menstrual cramps, mood swings, hot flashes and weight gain.

Understand how health lifestyle choices can help you feel your best at any stage—and know when to ask your doctor for additional suggestions.

**October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The awareness ribbon color is Pink.**

And the need for national awareness on the disease certainly hasn't diminished—since somewhere every 69 seconds a woman dies of breast cancer.

**Join The Fight!**



# How to do a BSE

Breast Self Examination (BSE) is to be performed each month in addition to an annual mammogram or a clinical exam. Knowing your cyclical changes, what is normal for you, and what regular monthly changes in the breast feel like is the best way to keep an eye on your breast health. Breast tissue extends from under your nipple and areola up toward your armpit.

**DIFFICULTY:** Easy

**TIME REQUIRED:** 15 minutes

**WHAT YOU NEED:**

- A mirror which lets you see both breasts
- A pillow for your head and shoulders
- Privacy



1. **Make a regular date for your BSE.** *If you are pre-menopausal:* Set a regular time to examine your breasts a few days after your period ends (5-7 days), when hormone levels are relatively stable and breasts are less tender. *If you are already menopausal* (have not had a period for a year or more): Pick a particular day of the month to do the exam, and then repeat your BSE on that day each month.



2. **Visual Exam—Hands on Hips.** In the privacy of your bathroom, strip to the waist and stand before a mirror. You will need to see both breasts at the same time. Stand with your hands on your hips and check the appearance of your breasts. Look at the size, shape, and contour. Note changes, if any, in the skin color or texture. Look at the nipples and areolas, to see how healthy they look.



3. **Arms over your head.** Still standing in front of the mirror, raise your arms over your head and see if your breasts move in the same way, and note any differences. Look at size, shape, and drape, checking for symmetry. Pay attention to your nipples and areolas, to see if you have any dimples, bumps or retractions (indentation). Look up towards your armpits and note if there is any swelling where your lymph nodes are (lower armpit area).



4. **Manual Exam—Stand and Stroke.** Raise your left arm overhead, and use your right hand fingers to apply gentle pressure to the left breast. Stroke from the top to the bottom of the breast moving across from the inside of the breast all the way into your armpit area. You can also use a circular motion, being sure to cover the entire breast area. Take note of any changes in texture, color or size. Switch sides and repeat. This is best done in the shower, as wet skin will have the least resistance to the friction of your fingers.



5. **Manual Exam—Check your Nipples.** Still facing the mirror, lower both arms. With the index and middle fingers of your right hand, gently squeeze the left nipple and pull forward. Does the nipple spring back into place? Does it pull back into the breast? Note whether or not any fluid leaks out. Reverse your hands and check the right nipple in the same way.



6. **Manual Exam—Recline and Stroke.** This is best done in your bedroom, where you can lie down. Place a pillow on the bed so that you can lie with both your head and shoulders on the pillow. Lie down and put your left hand behind your head. Use your right hand to stroke the breast and underarm, as you did in step 4. Take note of any changes in texture, color or size. Switch sides and repeat.

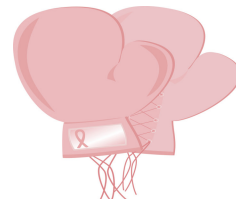
## 7. Tips for Doing Your BSE

- Mark your calendar to remind yourself to do your BSE regularly. This is a good way to prevent worry.
- Stay relaxed and breathe normally as you do your BSE. Becoming tense will produce some knots you may mistake as something else.
- Report any changes or unusual pain to your doctor or nurse. Keep a log of changes, if that helps you remember.
- Remember to have an annual clinical exam and a mammogram.

Reliable tips for a healthier you.



Breast Cancer



## More research saves women's lives

New research being done that focuses on women's health means more women are alive today.

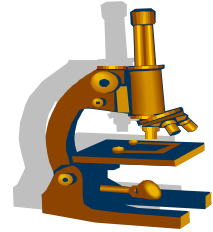
The Institute of Medicine released a new report showing that increased clinical research on breast cancer and heart disease has led to lowered death rates among women. The report also calls the cervical cancer vaccine a "breakthrough."

While the report was positive overall, it did identify areas of improvement.

"Many of those where there's been very little progress are those that don't kill women, but really have a very heavy burden on their quality of life," said the report's lead author, Dr. Nancy Adler, University of California-San Francisco.

Researchers say more work needs to be done to prevent unintended pregnancies, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis and dementia in women.

Just two decades ago—women were often overlooked in clinical trials and other research to prevent disease.



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## The New HPV Test You Should Ask Your Doctor About

There's a new, more sensitive way to screen for cervical cancer—yet only 15% of doctors are using it. Why the Pap may no longer be enough.

Suppose there were a screening test for cervical cancer that could detect potential dangers with far more sensitivity than the Pap? A test so reliable that when it was done with the Pap, you could trust the results nearly 100%. Sounds like all women would be getting it, right? Well...there is such a screen—the HPV test. It's been approved by the FDA and endorsed by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) and the American Cancer Society as an option to be done with your Pap, and yet only an estimated 15% of doctors are using it. Understand the limits of the Pap and what the new test can do, and getting updated info on who's at risk of cervical will, help start a conversation with your doctor regarding this test.

### What is the new HPV test?

Almost all cervical cancers are caused by prior infection with human papillomavirus, or HPV. There are more than 100 strains of HPV, about 40 of which can be spread by having sex. Some cause warts, others no symptoms at all. But some types cause cell abnormalities in the lining of the cervix that, years later, can become malignant. Two of these strains—numbers 16 and 18 are thought to be responsible for roughly 70% of cervical cancer cases. The HPV test literally homes in on genetic coding that occurs in these two, plus about a dozen other high risk strains. A negative HPV test means that no active virus could be found; a positive result, that one or more of those strains is present.

### How is this different from the Pap?

The Pap is designed for visual identification (by either lab technician or computer) of any cells that look abnormal. The HPV test was originally

approved by the FDA as a follow-up for women whose Pap results were ambiguous (technically called ASCUS—"atypical squamous cells of undetermined significance"), a category that may affect some three million women every year. Now it's been OK'd as a screening test for women 30 and over, to be done with the Pap and, generally, the same sample of cervical cells.

### How effective is it?

Last April, two scientists from the National Cancer Institute, writing in the prestigious New England Journal of Medicine about a study of 131,746 women in India, said that "among women between the ages of 30-59 years...a single HPV test performed 15-20 years after the median age of first sexual intercourse will detect many easily treatable, persistent infections and precancers while limiting over-treatment." One test, they wrote, "dramatically reduced the incidence of advanced cervical cancer and cervical cancer mortality."

*Better Research leads to Strides  
in Women's Health.  
Growing older doesn't have to  
mean getting old or falling  
apart...for more information  
contact Why Me at  
whymeoutmail@yahoo.com*

*Pass it on!*

A single click can help save a life.



Join the growing community of hope! You can help spread awareness by sharing this message with friends, family, and co-workers today.

**Support Why Me  
The Antigua &  
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*Thank you*

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## Environmental Health News--Breast Cancer

If we truly want to save lives, we must shift our attention from curing breast cancer to preventing it. This means reducing exposures to pesticides and hormones in food ingredients, in personal care products, and air borne pollutants, which all raise the risk of breast cancer. As the biggest killer of middle aged women, breast cancer is high on the agenda. But how to approach the war on breast cancer is a serious question. Rates have gone up from one in 20 women to one in eight since 1971. Something is clearly wrong in our approach. If we truly want to save lives, *we must shift our attention from curing cancer to preventing it.* This means understanding what causes it and reducing exposures to these causes.

Pesticides and hormones in food, air borne pollutants, and ingredients in personal care products all contribute to breast cancer. They are all hormone mimics, meaning that they act like estrogen in the body, increasing the likelihood that mammary tumors will grow. In some countries in Europe, reviewing and regulating hormone mimics have become a priority and they have disallowed the production of methylparaben products which seem to be in question. New evidence has been introduced to remove cancer causing chemicals from baby products, but why stop there? Women and girls should not have to check the label of every product they use to ensure they are safe. Most often the problematic ingredients are masked behind the term "fragrance" or not listed at all. Winning the war on breast

Better research in the past 20 years has led to lower death rates from breast cancer, heart disease and cervical cancer. But little progress has been made in other areas that affect women (lupus, lung cancer, alzheimer). But in some areas we have made significant gains including depression, HIV/AIDS and osteoporosis.



All said, it's quite positive and of course we are all encouraged, the progress is substantial, but the pitfalls; are that we haven't reached all women and health conditions yet, and the promise is that we can do better. A tremendous amount of promising research is underway to determine the cause of breast cancer and to establish effective ways to prevent it. Still doctors can't explain why one woman develops breast cancer and another doesn't. Right now, we still don't know enough about what causes breast cancer and we haven't yet figured out how to keep it from happening—so we can't say that we can "prevent" it. Researchers are working to learn how our "external" and "internal environments may work separately and together to affect our health and possibly increase the risk of breast cancer. One of the greatest accomplishments in women's health research has been the cervical cancer vaccine. It was a breakthrough. It gave us the ability to change the incidence of cervical cancer all over the world.

*A world with less Breast Cancer is a world with more birthdays.* (Love that expression!!)

Research is getting closer and closer...Join us in the fight (volunteer, donate, advocate,) against Cancer and with every step you take you'll be giving people facing Breast Cancer(all cancers) more candles to light.

*WHY ME?*

### Head to Toe

Your heart, bones, brain—what should you be doing to guard your health right now and for years to come?

#### HEART:

- Heart disease is the #1 killer of women, become informed for your heart's sake.

#### CANCER:

- Currently 1 in 8 women are diagnosed with breast cancer sometime in their lives. Do you know your risk?
- Lung Cancer, Skin Cancer, Cervical cancer and Ovarian cancer.

#### BONES:

- An estimated 10 million people will have osteoporosis, including 8 million women in the U.S. alone.

#### MIND:

- Migrains, depression, anorexia, bulimia get details

**OTHER CONDITIONS:** Thyroid. Learn why your thyroid may affect you.

Growing older doesn't have to mean getting old. Learn how to grow old gracefully with Why Me?

cancer and many other cancers require a different strategy—one that seeks to prevent cancer before it starts. We must establish regulations that decrease exposures to cancer causing chemicals in our food, air, water and personal care products.

To date, not much has been devoted to improve treatments and detection for breast cancer. Mammography does not prevent breast cancer, since once a tumor is present, the cancer already exists. Mammograms can, but do not always, help detect a tumor early, yet a large percentage of women who find a tumor will still die of the disease.

A renewed commitment to cure cancer should be the difference between life and death for many of us. To be successful, we need to start at the source.

