

Community Health Coalition, Inc.



Healthy People  
2020

Improving the health of Durham  
& NC communities since 1989

Community Health Coalition, Inc.

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Date: October 26, 2014

## Healthy Sunday Topic: Breast Cancer Awareness

October is breast cancer awareness month! Not only are one in eight women affected by this disease but African-American women are diagnosed with advanced disease at a disproportionate rate. This means that the disease has either progressed farther or is more difficult to treat. Here in North Carolina, breast cancer is the third leading cause of cancer.



**Dr. Sheila Allison, MD, Gynecologist** at Southpoint Medicine and Women's Health Associates says "**Early detection is one of the best weapons in the war against breast cancer. This includes regular self-breast examination as well as breast imaging**". The type of breast imaging may depend on your breast exam and family history.

Self-breast exam means regularly examining both breasts. This is important for detection of any early changes. The breasts are easier to exam after the menstrual period when hormone levels are the lowest. If no longer menstruating, choose a date (like your birthday date) for the exam every month.

Women with a strong family history of breast cancer may need genetic testing. This is because there are certain types of breast cancers that are inherited. Family history should be shared with your physician so she or he may determine whether a referral to a genetic counselor is warranted.

### Breast Cancer Risk Factors

Risk Factors for Breast Cancer Include:

- First degree relative (sister, mother or daughter) with breast cancer
- First pregnancy over age 30 or no pregnancy
- Has never breast fed an infant
- Early onset of menstrual periods or late menopause
- Excessive alcohol intake
- High fat diet
- Obesity

### What Are the Symptoms of Breast Cancer?

In its early stages, breast cancer usually has no symptoms. As a tumor develops, you may note the following signs:

- A lump in the breast or underarm that persists after your menstrual cycle.
- Pain or tenderness in the breast. Although lumps are usually painless, pain or tenderness can be a sign of breast cancer.
- A noticeable flattening or indentation on the breast, which may indicate a tumor that cannot be seen or felt.
- Any change in the size, contour, texture, or temperature of the breast.
- Unusual discharge from the nipple that may be clear, bloody, or another color. It's usually caused by benign conditions but could be due to cancer in some cases.
- A marble-like area under the skin.
- An area that is distinctly different from any other area on either breast

### Breast Cancer and Prevention

Women who walk 10 miles or more a week decrease their risk of breast cancer. This is because they have a lower risk of obesity. We know that obese women make more estrogen in fat stores. Since high estrogen levels are a risk factor for breast cancer, reducing fat reduces estrogen levels consequently reducing breast cancer risk. Fatty food causes reabsorption of estrogen also contributing to high estrogen levels. Lifestyle changes of getting regular exercise and decreasing fat in your diet can add up to you decreasing your risk of breast cancer! You can participate in maintaining your health by the following:

- Do self-breast exams
- Get regular mammograms
- Revise your diet to eliminate unhealthy fatty foods
- Make regular exercise a part of your lifestyle



**Remember:** Annual mammogram screening for women over the age of 40 and those at high risk, Breast self-examination at least once a month for those over the age of 20, and Control your weight by maintaining a healthy lifestyle and exercising regularly.

#### **For More Information:**

- [www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org) or 1-877-GO KOMEN
- The Living Beyond Breast Cancer 1.888.753.LBCC (5222)
- Nat'l Cancer Institute's Cancer Info Services 1.800.4.CANCER
- Breast & Cervical Cancer Control Program (BCCCP) 919.707.5300

**Health Tip** is a message from **Community Health Coalition, Inc.** and is written in partnership with **Central Carolina Black Nurses' Council Inc.**, **The Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Durham and Vicinity**, and **Duke Regional Hospital**.

**REMEMBER Healthy People 2020: A Clear Vision to Healthy Living!**