

WOMEN'S HEALTH OUTLOOK

Provided by the Olson Center for Women's Health and the Wellness Council of the Midlands



The Olson Center for Women's Health offers an array of women's health services for every stage of your life.

Primary Care

- General internal medicine
- Well-woman care
- Mental health therapy

Obstetrics & Gynecology

- Pregnancy care
- Family planning
- Annual exams
- Gynecologic care
- Menopause management
- Gynecologic oncology

Diagnostic Services

- Digital mammography
- Bone density screening (DEXA)
- Obstetrical ultrasound
- Fetal monitoring
- First trimester screening
- Urodynamics

Specialty Care

- Breast care
- High-risk obstetrics
- Dysplasia (abnormal pap smears)
- Urogynecology (incontinence)
- Pain management
- Physical therapy
- Infertility
- Maternal diabetes management
- Midwifery
- Urology & sexual dysfunction

Counseling

- Genetics
- Social work
- Smoking/tobacco cessation
- Nutrition

Resource Center

- Health library
- Community education events
- Patient & family resources

On-site Support Services

- Interpretation
- Lab draw
- Massage
- Financial counselor

For appointments, call
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For comments or questions about
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Breast Health and Cancer Prevention

It is rare to find a woman today who is not concerned about the threat of developing breast cancer. In U.S. women, excluding cancers of the skin, breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer and the second most common cause of cancer-related death (second only to lung cancer) in women ages 30-70. One of every eight women in the U.S. now has breast cancer. According to the American Cancer Society's "Cancer Facts & Figures 2010", an estimated 207,090 new cases of invasive breast cancer are expected to occur in U.S. women in 2010, with an estimated 39,840 deaths. Fortunately, mortality rates continue to decline, especially among younger women, due to earlier detection, improved treatment, and decreased incidence. Eighty-five percent of breast cancers occur in women 50 and older (average age is 61) but is still the leading cause of death among women ages 40-49.

Many factors may influence the development of breast cancer, with the greatest risk being female (males account for 1,970 new cases of breast cancer each year, and 390 deaths) and age. Other risk factors out of a woman's control include: a long menstrual history (menarche, or the onset of menstrual periods, before age 12; and menopause, the cessation of menstrual periods, after the age of 55); never having children; having one's first child after age 30; personal and family history of breast cancer; inherited mutation of the breast cancer susceptible genes (BRCA1 and BRCA2); diagnosis of certain types of breast tissue from mammography or biopsy; high bone mineral density (routinely measured during osteoporosis screening); and chest radiation (typically related to the treatment of a previous cancer). While many of these risk factors are beyond a woman's control, some additional risk factors, which may be modified with lifestyle changes are weight gain after age 18; overweight or obesity; use of combined estrogen and progestin therapy (HRT); recent use of birth control pills; physical

inactivity; breastfeeding greater than 12 months in duration; smoking; eating a high fat diet; and consumption of one or more alcoholic beverages per day.



Some medical interventions can be used to reduce breast cancer rates. Receiving a prophylactic oophorectomy (surgical removal of the ovaries) in women with the BRCA gene mutation may reduce the incidence of breast cancer, however it may cause a sudden onset of uncomfortable menopausal symptoms. Prophylactic mastectomy (surgical removal of the breasts) will greatly reduce the risk of breast cancer, but may cause an increase in long term psychological issues (anxiety, depression, and impaired body image). The medication Tamoxifen, may significantly reduce breast cancer in high risk populations, however it is not without side effects. Also known as SERMS (Selective Estrogen Receptor Modulators), Tamoxifen has been implicated as causing an increased risk of uterine cancer, blood clots, stroke, and hot flashes.

While the risk factors for breast cancer are continually researched, early detection remains

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the key to finding breast cancer early and saving lives. Current recommendations include:

- Obtain yearly screening mammograms after age 40
- Receive a yearly breast exam every three years if you are between 20-40 years of age, and annually after age 40
- Monthly self-breast exams (SBE) after the age of 20 (95% of all lumps are found by the patient or their partner). Report any findings or changes to your health care provider as soon as possible.
- Reducing the modifiable risk factors mentioned above

Many women who perform SBE may feel their breasts are irregular in shape. This is normal. Areas that are soft, freely movable, variable in size or texture with menstrual cycles, or similar in both breasts are more likely to be benign or non-cancerous. However it is important to contact your primary care practitioner if you notice any change in the size or shape of the breast or areola (darkened area surrounding the nipple); a lump(s); skin changes such as pitting, dimpling, or redness; discharge, redness, irritation, or inversion of the nipple; or alterations in the pattern of blood vessels of the breast. Breast pain is also a common complaint and is rarely associated with breast cancer. Stopping or reducing the amount of caffeine intake (coffee, tea, cola, chocolate) can significantly

decrease breast tenderness.

A digital screening mammogram consists of two digital views of each breast. Also, ultrasound of the breast is a valuable addition to mammography to evaluate, diagnose, and treat breast disease.

Most treatments for breast cancer today include breast-conserving surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy or hormonal therapy which can improve survival significantly.

Support groups are linked to improved survival. The mind-body connection continues to be explored. Cognition and sexuality issues are under study.

Contributed by Linda Pierce, APRN

Resources: If you enjoy surfing the web, there are some 40+ sites dealing with breast health, screening, cancer, and support groups including The American Cancer Society, Cancer information Service of the National Cancer Institute, YWCA of the USA Encore Program, National Alliance of Breast Cancer Organizations, National Cancer Institute, etc.



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