

# *Let's Talk About Health*



**Health Screenings that Detect Breast Cancer and Lifestyle Choices that May Help Reduce the Risk of Developing it:**

*A comprehensive guide for women with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their caregivers*



Mainstreaming Medical Care Program



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*A comprehensive guide for women with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their caregivers\**

### **Research and Writing**

Leone Murphy, RN, MS, CS

### **Editors**

Beverly Roberts, Director, Mainstreaming Medical Care Program  
Helen Rivera, Administrative Assistant, Mainstreaming Medical Care Program  
Celine Fortin, Associate Executive Director, The Arc of New Jersey  
Diane Flynn, Communications Coordinator, The Arc of New Jersey

### **Reviewed by**

Theodor Feigelman, MD  
Caryl Heaton, DO  
Theodore Kastner, MD  
John Nevins, DO

### **Graphic Design and Layout**

Diane Flynn

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*\*This booklet was prepared in 2009, relying on information from the American Cancer Society and other widely accepted medical sources. Recognizing that future medical advances and breakthroughs may alter some of the information provided here, it is important to stress that **individuals should always rely on the medical advice of their doctor**, as well as a second opinion when indicated, to determine the best treatment approach in any given situation.*

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To request a copy of this publication, call 732.246.2525, ext. 35, or send an email to [info@arcnj.org](mailto:info@arcnj.org)  
[www.arcnj.org](http://www.arcnj.org)



## *What is cancer?*

- ▶ Cancer is a group of fast-growing cells in your body that are not normal. Most cancers are named for the organ or type of cell in which they start (for example, cancer that starts in the *breast* is called *breast cancer*).
- ▶ Many people are afraid to talk about cancer, but the more you know about your body and about the things you can do to reduce your risk for cancer, the longer and healthier your life will be.
- ▶ There are many treatments available for cancer. The earlier cancer is found (diagnosed), the easier it is to treat and the better the chance that treatment will be successful.
- ▶ The best way to find cancer early is for your doctor to regularly perform the appropriate cancer screenings (tests). So even if you are feeling embarrassed or afraid, it is still very important to have these tests done.
- ▶ Many people never get cancer! And many people who do get cancer are successfully treated and go on to live long and happy lives.

## *What causes cancer?*

- ▶ Doctors usually cannot explain why a person develops cancer. But there are certain **risk factors** that increase the chance that a person will develop cancer.
- ▶ Some risk factors just exist and cannot be changed, like your age, whether you are a man or woman, and your family's health (medical) history.
- ▶ Other risk factors come from something you do (a behavior), like smoking. If you avoid these kinds of behaviors, and replace them with healthier behaviors, you can lower your risk for cancer.



## *What is breast cancer?*

- ▶ Breast cancer occurs when a tumor forms in tissues of the breast, usually the ducts (tubes that carry milk to the nipple) and lobules (glands that make milk).
- ▶ Breast cancer occurs most commonly in women. A very small amount - only about 1% of all breast cancers - occur in men.
- ▶ Breast cancer is the most common form of cancer diagnosed in women.

## *Are there symptoms of breast cancer?*

- ▶ A woman who has breast cancer may not have any symptoms, but some women may have one or more of these symptoms:
  - A breast lump or thickening that feels different from the surrounding tissue
  - Bloody discharge from the nipple
  - Change in the size or shape of a breast
  - Changes to the skin over the breast, such as dimpling
  - Inverted nipple
  - Peeling or flaking of the nipple skin
  - Redness or pitting of the skin over the breast, like the skin of an orange
- ▶ Call your doctor right away if you are having any of these symptoms.



## *What are the risk factors for breast cancer?*

- ▶ Women are more at risk for breast cancer than men, and the risk of developing breast cancer increases after age 50.
- ▶ A woman's risk for breast cancer is higher if someone in her family has had breast cancer.
- ▶ A woman's risk for breast cancer is higher if she has inherited certain gene mutations, like mutations of the BRCA1 or BRCA2 genes (these gene mutations can only be confirmed with genetic testing).
- ▶ A woman's risk for breast cancer is higher if she is overweight or eats a diet high in fat.
- ▶ A woman's risk for breast cancer is higher if she has never had children or if she was over 30 when she had her first child.
- ▶ A woman's risk for breast cancer is higher if she started getting her period before age 12, or if she went through menopause after age 55.
- ▶ A woman's risk for breast cancer may increase if she takes birth control pills, or if she takes hormones after menopause (Hormone Replacement Therapy).



## *What can I do about breast cancer?*

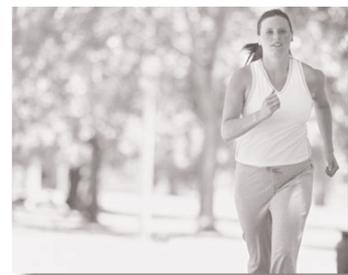
- 1) Make changes to your daily living habits** that can help reduce your risk for breast cancer and help you feel better in general. This booklet talks about some of these healthy changes starting on page 4.
- 2) Perform a breast self-examination each month.**
- 3) See your doctor for regular breast cancer screenings (tests)**, which include the *Clinical Breast Examination* and the *Mammogram*.



## EXERCISE REGULARLY

■ Be active for at least 30 minutes each day for at least 5 days each week. Some things you can do for exercise are:

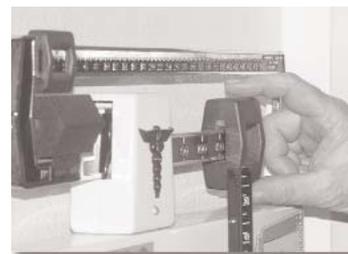
Walking                      Swimming                      Dancing  
Biking                        Gardening                     Housework  
Exercise videos



## MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT

■ Talk to your doctor or nurse about what a healthy weight is for you - ***and if you need to lose weight, do it!***

■ You can lose weight by exercising and by decreasing the amount of fatty foods you eat. Joining a weight-loss support group can also be helpful.



## EAT A VARIETY OF HEALTHY FOODS

■ Diets that are high in fruits and vegetables may lower your risk for cancer. Eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day.

■ Eat baked, grilled or broiled food instead of fried food.

■ Avoid foods with lots of sugar, like cookies and candy.



## DON'T SMOKE

■ Smoking increases the risk for developing breast and other types of cancer (including the most serious type of breast cancer).

■ ***If you smoke, quit now.*** There are treatments available that can help, so talk to your doctor about what is best for you (joining a stop-smoking support group can also be helpful).



## LIMIT ALCOHOL USE

■ Regular use of alcohol increases your risk for breast cancer (*even a few drinks each week is unhealthy*).

■ Not drinking alcohol at all is an important way that you can reduce your risk for developing breast cancer.

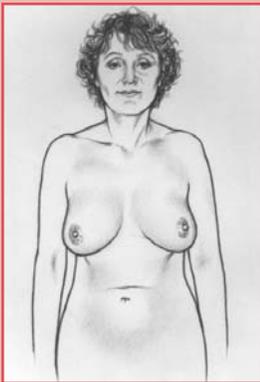


# REDUCING YOUR RISK: *Monthly breast self-examination*

You need to know how your breasts normally look and feel. Every month you should examine your breasts for lumps, thickness or other changes. This way you can report any changes to your doctor right away.

Plan to examine your breasts at the same time every month (a week or so after your period ends is a good time). It doesn't take long. You need to check each breast all over, including the area under your arm (armpit). Ask your doctor or nurse to show you the right way to examine your breasts or follow the directions here.

## 1. LOOK FOR CHANGES



► In your bedroom, undress to the waist. Stand in front of your mirror. With your hands at your side, look for:

- Changes in shape
- Changes in color, especially redness
- Dimpling
- Nipple discharge



► Raise your hands over your head. Check the front and side views. Look for:

- Changes in shape
- Dimpling



► With your hands on hips, press down and bend forward. Check for:

- General appearance
- Changes in size or shape
- Redness of the nipples or breast skin

## 2. FEEL FOR CHANGES

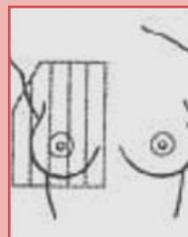


► Lie down with a towel under your right shoulder and raise your right arm above your head.



► Use the pads of the three middle fingers of your left hand. Move the fingers in dime-sized circles. Examine the area from:

- Your underarm to bra line
- Across to your breast bone
- Up to your collar bone
- Back to your armpit



► Move across the breast in an up and down pattern called a *vertical strip pattern*.

► Use *three levels of pressure* to examine your breasts: light, medium and firm.

► Now repeat the same exam on your left breast, using your right hand.

## 1. MAMMOGRAM

► Mammography is the most important tool for early detection of breast cancer because it can find cancer before the cancer can be felt. A mammogram is a low-dose breast x-ray that is **quick, easy and safe**. Mammography uses less radiation than a dentist's x-ray and is able to find cancers when they are very small, often several years before a lump or change in the breast can be felt. **The American Cancer Society recommends yearly mammograms beginning at age 40.**



### SCHEDULING YOUR MAMMOGRAM

#### 1) Get a prescription from your doctor

Ask the doctor to recommend a good place to have the mammogram (Medicare, Medicaid and other health insurances cover the cost).

#### 2) Schedule an appointment

■ A facility where they use digital mammography is the best choice.

■ If you have sensitive breasts, don't schedule an appointment the week before you expect to get your period (a good time for a mammogram is a week or so after your period ends).

#### 3) Go to the same facility each year

The facility will store the x-rays and compare them year-to-year for any changes.

### THE DAY OF YOUR MAMMOGRAM

■ The mammography procedure requires you to

undress to the waist, so wear a skirt, or slacks and a blouse (you will be given a gown to wear). The procedure takes about 20 minutes, and should include two views of each breast.

■ Don't wear deodorant, cream or powder when you go for your mammogram appointment.

■ A technologist will be there to position your breasts. It is necessary to flatten the breast to get a high-quality picture. This can be uncomfortable, but will only take a few seconds.

■ The facility is required to notify you and your doctor of your results. If you do not hear within 10 days, call your doctor or the facility.

■ If the mammography center calls you to come back for more testing, ***don't panic***. This means they saw something and they want to get a clearer picture of it (Most women who return for a re-screening have no problem).

## 2. CLINICAL BREAST EXAM

► A Clinical Breast Exam is an examination of your breasts by a health care professional performed at least every 3 years, starting around 20 years of age. For this exam, you will need to undress from the waist up. The examiner will first look at your breasts for changes in size or shape. Then, using the pads of the fingers, the examiner will gently feel your breasts and the area under both of your arms.

► This is a good time to ask the health care professional to teach you to examine your own breasts. You should practice the exam in front of them if you are unsure.



## 3. MRI (MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING)

► Some women may have inherited certain genes that put them at higher risk for developing breast cancer. These women should talk to their doctor about whether they should have an *additional* screening test, called an MRI.

► For women in a higher-risk category, all screening tests should be done annually starting at age 30.

A few simple changes in your daily meal preparation and eating habits can help you feel better in general, and can help to reduce your risk for developing breast and other types of cancer.

- ▶ Plan your menus for the week
- ▶ Eat extra-lean meat, chicken and fish
- ▶ Trim the fat off meat before cooking
- ▶ Try not to use too much butter
- ▶ Do not add salt
- ▶ Buy a set of measuring cups and a food scale, and always weigh or measure portions

The key to healthy eating is **PORTION CONTROL** (eating the right amounts of food). You can do this by learning to compare a serving size to an item you know:

Type of Food	Measurement	About the size of	
Meat	3 Ounces, cooked	A deck of cards	
Pasta	½ Cup, cooked	A tennis ball	
Bagel	4 Ounces	A hockey puck	
Rice	½ Cup, cooked	Half of a baseball	
Cheese	1 Ounce	4 Dice	 <b>x 4</b>

## *What does a healthy diet look like?*



### **GRAINS AND STARCHES (Choose 6-8 servings each day)**

*Includes bread, pasta, potatoes and corn. A serving is 1 slice of bread, ½ an English muffin or pita bread, ¾ cup dry cereal, ½ cup cooked cereal, ½ cup potato, yam, peas, corn or cooked beans, or ½ cup of cooked rice or pasta. It is important to choose more **whole grains** (for instance, brown rice, whole-wheat bread, whole-wheat or brown-rice pasta).*

### **VEGETABLES (Choose at least 3-5 servings each day)**

*A serving is 1 cup raw or ½ cup cooked vegetables.*

### **FRUIT (Choose 2-4 servings each day)**

*A serving is ½ cup canned fruit (in fruit juice or light syrup) or 1 small piece of fresh fruit, 1 cup of melon or raspberries, or 1 ¼ cup of strawberries.*

### **MILK/DAIRY (Choose 2-3 servings each day)**

*A serving is 1 cup of non-fat or low-fat milk, or 1 cup of reduced-calorie yogurt.*

### **MEAT AND MEAT SUBSTITUTES (Choose 4-6 oz. each day, divided between meals)**

*Includes lean beef, skinless chicken or turkey, fish, eggs, tofu, dried beans, cheese, cottage cheese and peanut butter. A serving size is 3 oz of meat, 1 egg, 1 TBSP peanut butter, or ½ cup of tofu.*

### **FATS AND SWEETS (Keep servings small and save them for a special treat!)**

*Includes potato chips, candy, cookies, cakes, crackers and fried foods. These contain a lot of fat and/or sugar, and are not as nutritious as vegetables or whole grains. A serving is ½ cup of ice cream, 1 small cupcake or muffin, or 2 small cookies.*

### **VITAMIN D**

*Vitamin D is an important nutrient for good health and can reduce your risk for breast and other types of cancer. Many adults do not get enough Vitamin D in their diets, so talk to your doctor about taking Vitamin D supplements and/or spending 10-15 minutes outside each day, in direct sunlight.*

## *What does a sample menu look like?*

Food choices can be very personal and differ greatly from one family to another. The sample menu below gives some examples of how foods can be exchanged to create a balanced diet.



### **BREAKFAST**

- Cereal (Starch )
- Sliced banana (Fruit)
- Whole-wheat toast with cottage cheese (Starch, Protein)
- Milk (Dairy, Protein)
- Coffee

### **BREAKFAST OPTION**

*Don't feel like cereal for breakfast? Have eggs instead (or egg substitute) as your protein and a whole-grain english muffin or crackers as a substitute for the starches.*

### **LUNCH**

- Chunk-style vegetable soup (Starch, Vegetable, Protein)
- Tuna sandwich (Starch, Protein)
- Fruit cup (Fruit)
- Tea or diet soda

### **LUNCH OPTION**

*At a local pizzeria for lunch? The crust will count as starch, the tomato sauce and vegetable toppings (mushrooms, green peppers, and onions, for example) will cover your vegetable exchange, and the cheese is a good source of protein. Watch out for the fat content by avoiding meat toppings.*

### **DINNER**

- Baked chicken (Protein)
- Baked potato (Starch)
- Green salad (Vegetable)
- Water or tea
- Sugar-free Jell-O

### **DINNER OPTION**

*Invited to a friend's for dinner? Enjoy the grilled chicken breast, corn on the cob and vegetable-filled salad. Since the corn was the only starch exchange with your meal, you may be able to enjoy a small slice of angel food cake with a few fresh strawberries!*

## THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING YOUR FAMILY HEALTH HISTORY

▶ It is important for you to ask your family members (mom, dad, grandparents, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles) about your **FAMILY HEALTH HISTORY** and about any diseases or cancers they have now, or have had in the past. When there is a history in your family of a certain disease (diabetes, heart disease) or a certain type of cancer, your risk for developing it increases.

▶ Sometimes relatives get upset when you talk about cancer. Tell them you need to know so that you can tell your doctor. This way, *you are taking care of your health and advocating for yourself.*

▶ **It is very important for your doctor to know your family health history.** You need to tell your doctor if someone in your family has had breast cancer or other types of cancer. It will make a difference in how early and how often your doctor performs regular breast cancer screenings. It will also alert your doctor to follow you more closely for this type of cancer.

▶ **It is a very good idea to have a written record of your family health history.**



## *What is the good news about breast cancer?*

▶ Mammograms can find a lump when it is very small and can't even be felt.

▶ 80% of lumps found are benign (not cancerous).

▶ Most women who have breast cancer will live a long time if the cancer is found early and treated.

▶ Your chances of preventing breast cancer or finding it early are very good, so ***begin an action plan today that includes healthier lifestyle choices and regular screenings!***

For more information about breast and other types of cancer, contact:

The American Cancer Society  
1-800-ACS-2345  
[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)