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BE BREAST AWARE



RADNET (PRIVATE) LIMITED
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Well Woman Clinic

Introduction

Whatever your age, size or shape, it's important to take care of your breasts. Breast cancer is the 2nd most common cancer in women in Zimbabwe, after cervical cancer, so it is important to look after your breasts by being breast aware.

Being breast aware means getting to know how your breasts look and feel so you know what is normal for you. You can then feel more confident about noticing any unusual changes.

Although it's rare, men can also get breast cancer so they need to be breast aware too.

How do I check my breasts?

There is no right or wrong way to check your breasts. Just try to get used to looking at and feeling your breasts regularly. You can do this in the bath or shower, when you use body lotion or when you get dressed. You decide what is comfortable and best for you.

What changes should I look and feel for?

Everyone's breasts look and feel different. For many women it's normal to have lumpy breasts and/or tenderness or pain around their period. It's also common to have one breast larger than the other, or breasts that are different shapes.

Examples of changes are swelling, redness, itchy skin, a rash, dimpling, nipple discharge, change in shape, a lump. However some changes may also be brought about by menopause, pregnancy hormones or menstrual periods. When checking your breasts, try to be aware of any changes that are different for you.

When should I see the doctor?

You know better than anyone how your breasts look and feel normally, so if you notice a change, go and see your GP as soon as you can. Most breast changes are likely to be normal or due to a benign breast condition rather than being a sign of breast cancer.

When can I get a breast cancer screening test?

Mammograms are low dose X-rays of the breast, which can detect cancer before it can be felt.

Screening mammography should be performed from the age of 40.

It is generally not performed in women under the age of 40 because the breast tissue can be dense which can make the x-ray images less clear so normal changes or benign breast conditions can be harder to identify.

Breast cancer can develop between screening mammograms so it's important to continue to be breast aware and report any changes to your GP even if you've had a mammogram recently. If your breasts are dense your doctor may suggest additional adjuvant screening in ultrasound as well. If you have a family history of breast cancer, mammograms may be required more frequently and at an earlier age.

Can I reduce my risk of getting breast cancer?

It is not known exactly what causes breast cancer but you may help to reduce your risk and look after your general health by:

- maintaining a healthy weight
- doing regular exercise
- not drinking too much alcohol
- eating a well balanced diet, plenty of fruit, vegetables and without too much saturated fat.

The breast awareness 5-point code

1. Know what is normal for you by checking your breasts regularly.

2. Know what changes to look for.

3. Look at and feel your breasts regularly.

4. Tell your GP about any changes straightaway.

5. Go for breast screening when you are eligible.