



Live Well, Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance professionals at Christensen Group Insurance

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WOMEN'S HEALTH: BREAST CANCER

Research estimates that 1 in 8 women will be diagnosed with invasive breast cancer during their lives. Breast cancer is a disease in which malignant cells form in the tissues of the breast. There are three main types:

- Ductal carcinoma – The most common; begins in the cells of the ducts.
- Lobular carcinoma – Begins in the lobes and is more often found in both breasts than are other types of breast cancer.
- Inflammatory breast cancer – Uncommon type in which the breast is warm, red and swollen.

Causes and Risk Factors

It is unclear what specifically triggers breast cells to grow abnormally. Medical experts attribute the development of breast cancer to a combination of genetics, lifestyle choices and reproductive factors that may include:

- Older age
- Menstruation at an early age
- Family history
- Having dense breast tissue
- Never having given birth, or having first given birth at an older age
- Having radiation therapy to the breast/chest
- Drinking alcoholic beverages
- Taking hormones
- Being Caucasian or African-American

Symptoms and Screenings

The most common indication of breast cancer is discovering a lump in the breast or underarm area. Other signs include:

- Swelling
- Skin irritation/dimpling
- Nipple pain/abnormalities
- Redness or scaly skin
- Discharge from the nipple

To detect breast cancer, a doctor may use a mammogram, or breast X-ray; a biopsy, which is the removal of cells or tissues to be viewed under a microscope; estrogen and progesterone receptor tests to determine the levels of each hormone or an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging), a procedure that uses a magnet, radio waves and a computer to make a series of detailed pictures of inside the body.

Prognosis and Treatment

The chance of recovery and the treatment options depend on many factors, including the stage of cancer, how fast the tumor is growing, hormone receptor levels and a woman's age and general health. There are four standard types of treatment used for breast cancer:

- Surgery, ranging from a small lump of tissue being removed to an entire breast (mastectomy).
- Radiation therapy uses high-energy X-rays to kill cancer cells or to prevent their growth.
- Chemotherapy uses drugs to stop the growth of cancer cells.
- Hormone therapy removes hormones or blocks their action to keep cancer cells from growing.

Prevention

It is important to give yourself a monthly breast exam. Other ways to keep breast cancer at bay:

- Limit alcohol and fats
- Stay physically active
- Maintain a healthy weight

Visit www.breastcancer.org or www.komen.org for more information.