Southeast Asian Women and Breast Cancer

Facts about breast cancer for Southeast Asian women ages 50 and older

Here are some facts to know about breast cancer. Breast cancer affects women of all cultures. It can be a serious disease if not found early. Many women do not like to complain of pain or discomfort. Because of this some women may delay seeking attention for a disease until it is in the advanced stages. Your chance of getting breast cancer increases with age and having a close relative with breast cancer.

Common Beliefs About Breast Cancer:
- "You can catch breast cancer from another person."
- "Most women will die if they have breast cancer."
- "If I don't feel sick why should I get screened?"
- "Many women have a fear of disfiguring surgery."
- "There is nothing you can do to prevent breast cancer — it will happen anyway."

Truths About Breast Cancer
- Breast cancer cannot be caught by another person. It is not your fault if you get cancer.
- If breast cancer is found early most women will not die from the disease.
- There are tests that can find cancer very early before you feel sick (screening tests).
- Most lumps, if small, can be removed without losing your breast.

Finding breast cancer early can save your life. Most women find cancer lumps themselves.
Three Things You Can Do Right Now

1. **Mammography:**
   
   It is best to have your first mammogram between the ages of 40 and 50. A mammogram is an x-ray or picture of the inside of your breast. It can often find cancers too small to be felt by you or your doctor. It may be a little uncomfortable but is not painful. It takes just a few minutes.

2. **Clinical Breast exam:**
   
   A clinical breast exam is done by your doctor or nurse at each annual check-up. This is a good time to ask questions and talk about any concerns you have.

3. **Breast self-examination:**
   
   - Examine your breasts a few days after your menstrual period. If you are not having periods, try and remember to do it on the first day of each month. *You may be shy at first but that is ok!*

   - Look for changes in your breasts. Look at your breasts in the mirror for any dimpling, a change in the shape of the breast, swelling, redness or dry skin around the nipple. Raising your hands over your head may show the skin changes better in the mirror.
• The exam:
  - While lying on your back place a pillow under the breast you want to check first.
  - Raise your hand above your head on the side that your are doing the check first.
  - With your other hand, feel your breast with the flat of your first three fingers.
  - Start near the nipple and go around the breast in a circular motion and up into the armpit.
  - Repeat on the other breast.

Tell your doctor or nurse right away about any changes. If you do not have a doctor tell a sister, close family relative, or friend who may help you.

For many women their breasts will feel lumpy. After a while you will know when something is not right. Cancer is usually small and hard like a pebble and does not move.
Questions?

Call (206) 598-5500

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. The UWMC Clinic staff is also available to help at any time.

Notes: