

# EDUCATOR RESOURCES



## Breast Cancer Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment Information

### *Breast Cancer Screening Tests*

#### **What is a Mammogram?**

A mammogram is an X-ray of the breasts. It can find breast cancer when it is very small, even too small to feel — and easier to treat.

A mammogram is the best breast cancer screening tool we have today to find breast cancer. Starting at age 40, women at average risk should get a mammogram every year. However, some breast cancers are not seen on a mammogram. All clinical findings should be checked by a health care provider, even if a mammogram is normal.



#### **What is a Clinical Breast Exam?**

A clinical breast exam (CBE) by a health care provider should be part of regular medical checkups. If one is not offered, ask for one.

During a CBE, your health care provider (e.g. nurse or doctor) looks at your breasts and carefully feels each entire breast from the collarbone to the bra line and from the armpit to the breastbone.

CBEs can be helpful in finding tumors in women less than 40 years of age, for whom mammograms are not recommended.



Have a CBE at least every three years starting at age 20 and every year starting at age 40.

When a mammogram is combined with a CBE the chances for finding cancer early are even greater than either test used alone. When breast cancer is found and treated early, many women go on to live long and healthy lives.

If you don't have a doctor, you may qualify for a low or no-cost mammogram; call the Susan G. Komen® Breast Care Helpline at 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636) Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m. EST (6:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. PT).

## ***Breast Cancer Diagnosis***

Breast cancer is often first suspected when a lump or change in the breast is found or when an abnormal area is seen on a mammogram. Most of the time, these findings do not turn out to be cancer. However, the only way to know for sure is through follow-up tests.

### **A biopsy is required to diagnose breast cancer.**

Some benign breast conditions can look like breast cancer. More tests may be needed to rule out the disease. A biopsy may be needed. Biopsies can be done with a needle or in the operating room. Biopsies involve removal of tissue or cells, which is then examined under a microscope for cancer cells.

The findings from a biopsy are reported on a pathology report. In the U.S., most breast biopsies result in a benign (non-cancerous) finding.

## ***Treatment Options***

**There are different ways to treat breast cancer, including:**

- Surgery: removal of cancerous tissue or tumors
- Radiation therapy: treatment using high energy X-rays to destroy cancer cells in the exposed area
- Chemotherapy: the use of drugs to treat cancer by killing cancer cells
- Hormone therapy: drugs that work by interfering with the effects of hormones on cancer growth
- Targeted or biologic therapy: treatment that works by going to the genes and proteins in cancer cells to stop their growth and spread



Depending on many factors, such as the type of breast cancer, stage at diagnosis and size and location of the tumor and tumor profiling, treatment may include one or more of these options.

Tumor profiling tests give information about the genes in cancer cells. Tumor profiling is used to help make treatment decisions in some people with estrogen receptor-positive cancers. It can help decide whether or not chemotherapy is needed in addition to hormone therapy.

If you are diagnosed with breast cancer, talk with your health care provider about tests that might be done to help decide on treatment that is most appropriate for you.