

KEY MESSAGES: KNOW WHAT IS NORMAL FOR YOU



Know What is Normal for You

Learning Objectives

After your discussion, the listeners or audience should be able to:

- Name the two most common risk factors for breast cancer,
- Name at least two differences in how breast cancer affects Black and African American women as compared to white women,
- Recall at least three breast changes that should be reported to a health care provider,
- Take a personal action to report any changes to their breast to a health care provider, and
- Take a personal action to share the information they learned with a friend or family member.

Primary Talking Points for This Key Message

1. All women are at risk of breast cancer.
2. Simply being born a woman and getting older are the two most common risk factors in the general population.
3. It is important for everyone to know how their breasts and underarm area normally look and feel.
4. It is critical for everyone to report changes to their health care provider.
5. Triple negative breast cancers are more often aggressive and have a poorer prognosis (outcome) than some other types of breast cancer. See [*Facts for Life: Triple Negative Breast Cancer*](#) for more information. The signs of breast cancer are not the same for everyone.

Special Talking Points for the Black and African American Community

1. Black and African American women are more likely than white women to develop breast cancer under the age of 40.¹
2. The median age for breast cancer diagnosis in Black and African American women is 60 years compared to 64 years in white women.¹
3. Black and African American women are more likely than other racial/ethnic groups to develop triple negative breast cancers.¹

Talking Points for Men	Talking Points for Younger Women	Talking Points for Older Women
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breast cancer impacts men as well as women. Men often have women in their lives — mothers, aunts, sisters or partners. Men can play an important role in supporting women to learn their risk, get screened, know what is normal for them and make healthy lifestyle choices. • Breast cancer in men is rare, but it can happen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black and African American women diagnosed with breast cancer at a young age generally have a more aggressive form of the disease.¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important for women of all ages to know how their breasts and chest area normally looks and feels, and to report any change to their health care provider.

Actions Listeners/Audience Can Take Related to the Breast Self-Awareness Key Message	Additional Talking Points for Each Action
<p>Know how your breasts look and feel and report any changes to your health care provider.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The signs of breast cancer are not the same for all women. It is important to know how your breasts normally look and feel. • If you notice any change, take charge of your health and see your health care provider. • Most women think about breast cancer if they find a lump in the breast. However, visual changes can be the first signs that something is going on in the breast and should also be checked. <p>For breast cancer survivors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have undergone treatment that involves removal of your breast tissue, it is important to know the “new normal” look and feel of your breasts. If you notice any changes, talk with your doctor.

Actions Listeners/Audience Can Take Related to the Breast Self-Awareness Key Message	Additional Talking Points for Each Action
<p>If you notice any of the following changes, take charge of your health and see your health care provider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lump, hard knot or thickening inside the breast or underarm area • Swelling, warmth, redness or darkening of the breast • Change in the size or shape of the breast • Dimpling or puckering of the skin • Itchy, scaly sore or rash on the nipple • Pulling in of your nipple or other parts of the breast • Nipple discharge that starts suddenly • New pain in one spot that doesn't go away 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any breast change should be reported when it is noticed. You should not wait until the symptoms are fully developed or advanced. Some changes can happen over time and even subtle changes should be reported. These changes include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lump, hard knot or thickening inside the breast or underarm area • Swelling, warmth, redness or darkening of the breast: a rare and aggressive form of breast cancer, called inflammatory breast cancer, can look like an infection, so swelling, warmth, redness or darkening should be reported. There may not be a lump. • Change in the size or shape of the breast: Many women have one breast that is slightly larger than the other, and that is normal for them. But any noticeable change in the size or shape of the breast should be reported. • Dimpling or puckering of the skin: a dimple could look like a dimple that someone has in their cheek. But a dimple in the breast should be reported to your health care provider. • Itchy, scaly sore or rash on the nipple: this might signal an unusual type of breast cancer that forms under the nipple and may look like a sore, rash or insect bite. • Pulling in of your nipple or other parts of the breast: some women normally have retracted nipples, and that may be normal for them. If you notice that your nipple is pulling in and this is a change, report that your health care provider. • Nipple discharge that starts suddenly: some women may find that their clothing is damp or stained. Discharge that starts suddenly, is bloody or clear, or occurs in only one breast should be reported to your health care provider. • New pain in one spot that doesn't go away: for many people, breast cancer is not painful — that is why it can grow and grow before being detected. However, it is possible for cancer to cause pain. This pain is different from the general discomfort that a woman may have in both breasts just before her period. Pain that occurs in a specific area of the breast and does not go away should be reported your health care provider. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>continued on next page</i></p>

Actions Listeners/Audience Can Take Related to the Breast Self-Awareness Key Message	Additional Talking Points for Each Action
	<p>For breast cancer survivors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are still at risk for developing breast cancer in the future. It is important that you pay attention to all the warning signs of breast cancer. If you develop cancer again, you may have symptoms that are different from your first diagnosis. <p>For men:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men tend to have less breast tissue compared to women, so some of these signs can be easier to notice in men than in women. These symptoms may also be signs of a benign (non-cancerous) breast condition. • If you notice any of these signs or other changes in your breast, chest area or nipple, see your health care provider. Some men may be embarrassed about a change in their breast or chest area and put off seeing a provider, but this may result in a delayed diagnosis. Survival is highest when breast cancer is found early. • Your health care provider may examine your chest area or recommend an X-ray or ultrasound. • If a woman in your life notices these signs, encourage her to see her health care provider.

1. "Cancer Facts & Figures for African American/Black people 2022-2024," American Cancer Society (2022).

KNOW WHAT IS NORMAL FOR YOU: A PERSONAL STORY



A Personal Story

Ronnie is a 62-year-old woman who has seen many changes in her body over the years, mostly due to pregnancy and age. She has welcomed all those changes as signs of a life well-lived. She has always known her body well. Ronnie puts her bra on in front of a mirror every morning. She had noticed some changes in her left breast — that breast seemed larger than normal and had a slightly puckered spot along the side near her armpit. She thought it seemed odd, but decided it must be another change that comes along with getting older. She was busy helping her daughter with her new baby boy and didn't pay much attention to it, but it kept nagging her in the back of her mind for the next few days. Then one day about a week later, she asked her partner if he thought it looked different and he agreed that it did. He encouraged her to trust her instincts and call her doctor to talk about it. Ronnie called her doctor and described the changes she saw and her doctor linked her with a mammography facility that could get her in for a screening the next day. Ronnie's mammogram found an abnormal growth and follow-up tests confirmed that she had a malignant (cancerous) tumor. She was diagnosed with stage 3 invasive breast cancer.

Over the coming months she underwent treatment, including a mastectomy, radiation and chemotherapy. It was a long road to recovery for Ronnie. Her support system was invaluable to her during that time. She credits her partner for urging her to follow her gut and call the doctor when she did.

At her grandson's fifth birthday party, she was surprised with a picture tribute from her family to celebrate her life and health. The first picture was one of her holding her newborn grandson 5 years ago to the day, which was just two weeks before her diagnosis. Remembering how she felt that day, she thought about all the things she could have missed out on if she hadn't listened to that nagging voice in the back of her head.

Educational Materials You Can Use

- 5 Lifestyle Practices for Better Breast Health*
- 5 Things to Know about Breast Cancer Screening*
- 7 Tips For Being Your Own Best Advocate*
- Breast Health: Learn the Facts
- Breast Self-Awareness Messages for African Americans
- Everything You Need to Know If You Need a Follow-up Test*
- Facts for Life: Mammography
- Facts for Life: Racial & Ethnic Differences
- Facts for Life: Triple Negative Breast Cancer
- How To Get Good Health Care That's Affordable (And Good)*
- How To Take Charge of your Breast Health*
- Know Your Normal*
- Know Your Risk Factors postcard**
- Know Your Risk of Breast Cancer*
- Mammogram FAQ's: Here's What to Expect*
- Men Can Get Breast Cancer tri-fold brochure
- Poster set for African Americans
- Questions to Ask Your Doctor About Breast Health*
- Start Talking: The Importance of Family Health History*
- Take Care: Young Black and African American Women Talk About Breast Cancer
- What Do Genes Have To Do With Breast Cancer?*

*indicates a material from the *Know Your Girls*TM marketing campaign aimed at young African American women.

Questions You Can Ask Your Listener/Audience to Evaluate Your Success

1. Did you learn anything about breast health today that you did not know before? Please select only one answer.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

2. Will you share the breast health information you received today with a family member or friend? Please select only one answer.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

3. What are the two most common risk factors for breast cancer?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____

4. Please name at least two differences in how breast cancer affects Black and African American women as compared to white women?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

5. Will you visit a health care provider if you notice any of the following changes in your breasts:

- Lump, hard knot, or thickening inside the breast or underarm area
- Swelling, warmth, redness or darkening of the breast
- Change in size or shape of the breast
- Dimpling or puckering of the skin
- Itchy, scaly sore or rash on the nipple
- Pulling in of your nipple or other parts of the breast
- Nipple discharge that starts suddenly
- New pain in one spot that doesn't go away

Please Select only one answer.

Yes

No

Not sure