

# KEY MESSAGES: KNOW YOUR RISK



## Know Your Risk

### **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,
- Name the two personal actions for knowing your risk,
- Take a personal action to talk with both sides of their family about family health history,
- Take a personal action to talk with their doctor about their personal risk of breast cancer, and
- Take a personal action to share the information they have 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 to learn about your personal risk of breast cancer and talk with your doctor.
4. 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.

### **Special Talking Points for the Black and African American Community**

1. Black and African American women are more likely than white women to be diagnosed with breast cancer under the age of 40.
2. The median age for breast cancer diagnosis in Black and African American women is 60 years compared to 64 years in white women.<sup>1</sup>
3. Black and African American women are more likely than other racial/ethnic groups to develop triple negative breast cancers.<sup>1</sup>

Talking Points for Men	Talking Points for Younger Women	Talking Points for Older Women	Talking Points for Black Immigrants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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 in their lives to know their risk, get screened, know what is normal for them and make healthy lifestyle choices.</li> <li>• Breast cancer in men is rare, but it can happen.</li> <li>• Share your family health history with your children.</li> <li>• Encourage women in your life to learn about their risk.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although it is not as common, women in their 20s and 30s can develop breast cancer.</li> <li>• Black and African American women are more likely than white women to be diagnosed with breast cancer under the age of 40.<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Black and African American women diagnosed with breast cancer at a young age generally have a more aggressive form of the disease.<sup>1</sup></li> </ul> <p><i>The Know Your Girls™ campaign targets young African American women. Find these materials on the <a href="#">Educational Materials</a> page of <a href="#">komentoolkits.org</a>.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women of any age are at risk of breast cancer.</li> <li>• It is important for you to be informed about your personal risk of breast cancer and talk with your health care provider about it.</li> <li>• Older women should share any information they have about their health history and the health history of previous generations, if known, with younger members of their family. Black and African American women are more likely than white women to be diagnosed with breast cancer under the age of 40. Sharing any knowledge of breast cancer in previous generations with younger family members may help them to understand their risk.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Black immigrants typically have a breast cancer incidence (new cases) rate similar to that of their birth countries.</li> </ul>

Actions Listeners/Audience Can Take Related to the Breast Self-Awareness Key Message	Additional Talking Points for Each Action
<p>Talk to both sides of your family about your family health history.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This history from both your mother’s and your father’s side of the family can be valuable — genetic mutations can be passed along from either parent.</li> <li>• Sometimes families are private and quiet about their health histories, especially between generations and particularly when the family members are men. But knowing this family history can be helpful in understanding your own risk of breast cancer.</li> <li>• While it is true that we don’t know what causes breast cancer, we know that having a family history of breast, prostate or ovarian cancer may increase your risk of breast cancer.</li> <li>• It is important to remember that most breast cancer in the U.S. occurs in women with no family history of the disease. Even if you do not have a family history of breast, prostate or ovarian cancer, it is important to get screened.</li> </ul> <p><b>For older women:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk with your family to learn more about your family health history, and pass that information along to other family members.</li> </ul> <p><b>For breast cancer survivors:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be sure to tell younger generations of your family about your experience with breast cancer. Even if you are not comfortable talking about the details, it is important that they know their own family health history and can continue to pass that information along to younger generations.</li> </ul> <p><i>See the educator resource <a href="#"><u>“Start Talking: The Importance of Family Health History”</u></a> and <a href="#"><u>My Family Health History Tool</u></a> on <a href="#"><u>Komen.org</u></a></i></p>

Actions Listeners/Audience Can Take Related to the Breast Self-Awareness Key Message	Additional Talking Points for Each Action
<p>Talk to your doctor about your own personal risk of breast cancer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk with your doctor about what you have learned regarding your family history. Your doctor will use that information to discuss your risk for developing breast cancer and to decide which screening tests are right for you.</li> <li>• There are assessment tools and tests that can be used to help evaluate your risk of breast cancer and guide your health care provider’s recommendations. If your family history suggests the presence of a gene mutation in your family, genetic counseling and genetic testing might be an option.</li> <li>• Your doctor will ask you questions about your own health and history, such as the age when you started having periods or had your first child.</li> <li>• Talk with your doctor about any risk factors that might increase your personal risk of breast cancer.</li> <li>• Talk with your doctor if you feel that you are at higher-than-average risk for developing breast cancer.</li> </ul> <p><b>For breast cancer survivors:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be sure to discuss your experiences with breast cancer with any new doctor you see over the years.</li> </ul> <p><i>See the educator resource <a href="#"><u>“What Do Genes Have To Do With Breast Cancer?”</u></a> and <a href="#"><u>“Know Your Risk of Breast Cancer”</u></a></i></p>

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

# KNOW YOUR RISK: A PERSONAL STORY



## A Personal Story

Jewell is a wife and mother of three daughters. She was in her early 20s when her mother sat her down and told her she had breast cancer. Jewell was stunned and thought her mother, then in her early 50s, was much too healthy to have breast cancer. Her mother revealed to her, during her treatment, that Jewell's great-grandmother died of breast cancer in her 60s. Jewell's mother discovered her breast cancer during a routine mammogram. Jewell decided to tell her doctor at her next checkup about her family history of breast cancer. The doctor thanked her for bringing that information to him, made a note of it in her records and talked with her about the warning signs of breast cancer. He emphasized to Jewell to get her screenings regularly and to start annual mammography once she turned 40. When Jewell turned 53, her annual mammogram discovered a very small malignant (cancerous) tumor. The tumor was removed and she received radiation therapy for several weeks, but did not need any additional treatment.

Jewell is now in her 60s and caring for her elderly mother. Both of them are breast cancer survivors who spend their free time helping to educate other women about their risks of breast cancer. Jewell and her mother talk a lot about their battle with breast cancer with Jewell's daughters and other relatives, always encouraging them to get their recommended screenings on time.

### **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***<sup>™</sup> 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. \_\_\_\_\_