SECTION TWO

What is the Message?
SECTION TWO: WHAT IS THE MESSAGE?

PURPOSE OF THIS SECTION

The purpose of this section of the Toolkit is to provide you with the breast health and breast cancer information that you can share when you are conducting outreach and education in Black and African American communities.

This part of the Toolkit focuses on general information and messages that can be shared with all Black and African American audiences. This includes:

- Breast cancer and its impact in Black and African American communities
- Actions people can take related to the Breast Self-Awareness Key Messages

Resources and materials that you can use when conducting outreach and education, and tips for modifying those messages for special audiences like men, women under the age of 40, older women or Black immigrants are listed throughout this section and in Section Four: What are the Resources?

SPECIAL FEATURES OF THIS TOOLKIT

Throughout this Toolkit, you will find definitions, tips or ideas and resources that you can use to build your own knowledge and to improve your outreach and education program. Icons/pictures are used to identify each feature. The icons are:

- Definition
- Tip or Idea
- Resource

Each time you see an underlined resource, click on it to go to a page containing links to relevant resources and educational materials.
Learning Objectives
After reading this section, you should be able to:

• Define breast cancer,

• Describe the impact of breast cancer in Black and African American communities, and

• State actions women can take related to each key message.

Completing the Program Planning Square
In order to successfully complete this section of the Program Planning Square, first think about your audience and the amount of time you will have to share information. This will guide you in selecting the most appropriate information and talking points. Below are a few tips and resources to guide you in completing this box of the Program Planning Square:

Audience:

• If you know that you will be speaking with special audiences (men, women under the age of 40, older women or Black immigrants), you can modify the talking points in this section to meet their specific needs.

• If you will be talking with just one person, you can tailor your discussion to that person’s specific needs or interests. The education you provide in one-to-one interactions should feel more like a conversation than a presentation.

Time:

• If you will have one hour, you can include most of the information and actions suggested in this section.

• If you have less time, select just a few of the talking points provided in this section. Try to include at least one action that your audience members can take (for example, talking to their provider about their personal risk of breast cancer).

• Once you have considered your audience and the amount of time you will have, complete this section of your Program Planning Square. You can complete this section by selecting the information and talking points that you will share with your audience about breast cancer and its impact in the community, and the actions people can take related to the Breast Self-Awareness Key Messages.

The information presented in this section is available in the form of Educator Resources, Educational Materials and PowerPoint presentations. Use them where appropriate to conduct community outreach and education!
Information and Messages You Can Share with All Audiences

*Breast Cancer and its Impact in Black and African American Communities*

Many people do not understand what breast cancer is or that it is a problem in their community. Below are some of the questions that people have about breast cancer and general information about its impact in Black and African American communities. You can discuss this information with your audience.

**What is breast cancer?**

Every day, cells in our bodies divide, grow and die. Most of the time, cells divide and grow in an orderly manner. However, sometimes cells grow out of control. Breast cancer occurs when cells in the breast divide and grow abnormally and form malignant (cancerous) tumors.

To illustrate what this means, look at the pictures below.

![Picture of breast cells](image)

The light circles represent normal breast cells and the dark-shaded circles represent cancerous breast cells. As the cancerous cells grow and multiply, they develop into a malignant (cancerous) tumor within the breast.

**What causes breast cancer?**

Researchers have found many factors that increase breast cancer risk and a few factors that may lower risk. However, we still do not understand what exactly causes breast cancer to develop at a certain time in a certain person. It is likely a combination of risk factors, though it is still unclear why a certain combination of factors might cause cancer in one person but not another.

Although no one has complete control over whether s/he gets breast cancer, people can be empowered to make important breast care decisions by:

• Knowing their risk,
• Getting screened,
• Knowing what is normal for them, and
• Making healthy lifestyle choices.
Is breast cancer a problem in our community?
Yes! Breast cancer is the most common cancer among Black and African American women, just as it is for non-Hispanic white and Hispanic/Latina women in the U.S. It is also the second leading cause of death among Black and African American women in the U.S. This year about 1 in 9 Black and African American women in the U.S. are projected to develop breast cancer in their lifetime. An estimated 33,840 new cases of breast cancer are expected to occur among this population in 2019.

While Black and African American women are less likely to develop breast cancer compared to white women, they are more likely to develop aggressive, advanced-stage breast cancer that is diagnosed at a younger age. Black and African American women are about 40 percent more likely to die from breast cancer than are white women. This gap in breast cancer mortality has increased over the past decade.

Why are Black and African American women diagnosed at a more advanced stage?
Mammography screening rates for Black and African American women are similar to those for non-Hispanic white and Hispanic/Latina women. Yet they are often diagnosed with breast cancer at a later stage than non-Hispanic white women. This may happen for a number of reasons, including being more likely than women of other races to develop more aggressive cancers, and having fewer social and economic resources and a lower likelihood of getting prompt follow-up care after an abnormal mammogram.

Many things may prevent Black and African American women from obtaining screenings and prompt follow-up care after an abnormal mammogram. These barriers include, but are not limited to the following:
- Lack of awareness of breast cancer risks and screening methods
- Lack of insurance and access to regular health care
- Fear of diagnosis
- Negative experiences with illness or with the health care system in the past
- Cultural and socioeconomic barriers.

Screening tests can find cancer early, when chances of survival are highest. It is important for all women to get screened, and to follow up with their health care providers if a change in the breast is found.
You or your organization may also be able to offer some information to help people address barriers they face. If your organization has access to programs or resources that can help women overcome these barriers, be sure to share them. You can use the *My Breast Health Resource List* to keep track of resources that may benefit your audience.

If your organization does not have access to such programs or resources, you can reach out to your local Susan G. Komen Affiliate to find out what resources are available in your community. You can also share information about the Susan G. Komen® Breast Care Helpline (1-877 GO KOMEN or 1-877-465-6636), which may be able to provide women with a list of resources in their community.

**Actions People can Take Related to the Breast Self-Awareness Key Messages**

*Breast Self-Awareness Key Messages*

Komen has four key breast self-awareness messages that can be shared with all audiences. Each key message is listed below, along with its primary talking points and actions that audience members can take. Depending on what your audience already knows and the amount of time you have, you can share talking points and action items for just a few of the key messages, or all four.

The Toolkit contains an overview of each of the four key messages. Click on the key messages below to be taken to a page containing these overviews.

Each overview provides the following:

- Specific learning objectives for each key message
- Primary talking points
- Action items for each key message
- Additional talking points for each action item
- Evaluation questions that you can use to assess whether the audience has understood the information you have provided and whether they intend to take action to make healthy lifestyle changes

You can use these overviews to better understand each of the four Breast Self-Awareness Key Messages, how you can talk about them and how you can evaluate the effectiveness of the education you provide.

As you learn more about the specific talking points for each action item, the resources available for and evaluation questions, you can feel more comfortable empowering your audience to make important breast care decisions based on the key messages.
**Key Message: Know Your Risk**

Primary Talking Points

☐ All women are at risk of breast cancer.

☐ Being a woman and getting older are the two most common risk factors in the general population.

☐ It is important to learn about your personal risk of breast cancer and talk with your health care provider.

Special Talking Points for the Black and African American Community

☐ Black and African American women are more likely than white women to develop breast cancer under the age of 40<sup>3</sup>.

☐ The median age for breast cancer diagnosis in Black and African American women is 59 years compared to 63 years in white women<sup>1</sup>.

☐ Black and African American women are more likely than other racial/ethnic groups to develop triple negative breast cancers<sup>4</sup>.

☐ Triple negative breast cancers are more often aggressive and have a poorer prognosis (outcome) than some other types of breast cancer<sup>4</sup>. See *Facts for Life: Triple Negative Breast Cancer* for more information.

☐ Recent Black and African American women diagnosed with breast cancer at a young age generally have a more aggressive form of the disease<sup>4</sup>.

☐ Black immigrants typically have a breast cancer incidence (new cases) rate similar to that of their birth countries<sup>7</sup>.

Actions Audience Members Can Take

☐ Talk to both sides of your family about your family health history.

☐ Talk to your doctor about your own personal risk of breast cancer.

**Key Message: Get Screened**

Primary Talking Points

☐ Screening can detect a problem early, when the chances of survival are the highest.

☐ It is important for all women to get the recommended breast cancer screenings.

Actions Audience Members Can Take

☐ Discuss with your provider which screening tests are right for you.

☐ If you are at average risk, have a clinical breast exam at least every 3 years starting at age 20, and every year starting at age 40.

☐ If you are at average risk, have a mammogram every year starting at age 40.

☐ Sign up for a screening reminder at [komen.org/reminder](http://komen.org/reminder).
**Key Message: Know What is Normal for You**

**Primary Talking Points**
- The signs of breast cancer are not the same for everyone.
- It is important for everyone to know how their breasts and underarm area normally look and feel.

**Actions Audience Members Can Take**
- Know how your breasts look and feel and report any changes to your health care provider.
- If you notice any of the following changes, take charge of your health and see your health care provider:
  - 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

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**Key Message: Make Healthy Lifestyle Choices**

**Primary Talking Points**
- There are risk factors for breast cancer that cannot be controlled, like being a woman, getting older and family history. However, there are some things that can be controlled.
- Making healthy lifestyle choices may help to lower risk of breast cancer.
- Breastfeeding is associated with a lower risk of breast cancer, including triple negative breast cancers.

**Actions Audience Members Can Take**
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Add exercise to your routine.
- Limit alcohol intake.
- Limit use of menopausal hormones.
- Breastfeed, if you can.

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**Modifying/Tailoring Talking Points for Special Audiences**

In *Section One: Who is the Audience?*, you found basic information about issues that are important to consider when speaking with women under the age of 40 women, older women, men and Black immigrants. You can use the *Breast Self-Awareness Key Messages* resources to help you modify your talking points for these special audiences.
Related Educator Resources

After reading this section, you may have questions about preparing your message or talking with your audience about breast cancer. Below you will find a list of resources to support you in communicating your key messages about breast health and breast cancer.

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| Where can I find more information about the educational materials available and how to use them? | • Breast Health: Learn the Facts  
• Breast Self-Awareness Messages card for African-Americans  
• Everything You Should 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 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  
• Poster Set for African Americans  
• Questions To Ask Your Doctor About Breast Health*  
• Start Talking: The Importance of Family Health History*  
• Take Care of Yourself  
• What Do Genes Have To Do With Breast Cancer?*  
• Breast Self-Awareness for Black and African American Communities Presentation (Short Version)  
• Breast Self-Awareness for Black and African American Communities Presentation (Long Version)  
*indicates a material from the Know Your Girls™ marketing campaign aimed at young African American women |

**Summary of this Section**

This section of the Toolkit should help you to understand the information that you will be sharing with your audience, and consider questions like:

• How do I define breast cancer?
• How can I describe its impact in Black and African American communities and why it is important for Black and African American women to learn about breast self-awareness?
• How can I easily communicate information about breast cancer and actions women can take to empower them to make important breast-care decisions?
• How can I modify messages to address special audiences like men, women under age 40, older women or Black immigrants?
IN THE NEXT SECTION

In the next section of this Toolkit, you will find information and resources about venues that would be ideal for breast health and breast cancer outreach and education. More specifically, you will learn about the following:

- Potential venues in your community where you can conduct outreach and education about breast cancer
- How to prepare for outreach and education once you have identified or selected a venue

Resources to identify and prepare venues are also provided.

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