

Breast Cancer Health Education Working Manual



早发现，早诊断，
有效治疗，效果好！

*Early Detection, Early Diagnosis,
Effective Treatment, Good Results!*

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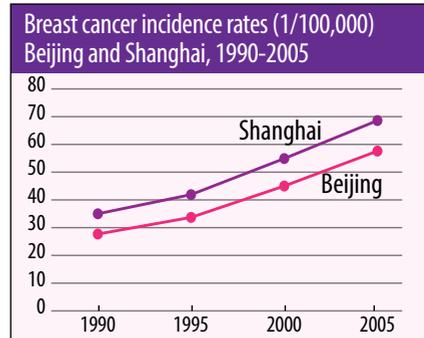
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Breast cancer: a health priority for China

Breast cancer is a serious and growing threat to China. It can affect any adult Chinese woman.

Breast cancer ranks as one of the most frequently diagnosed types of cancer among women in China older than 25. And the burden of the disease is growing. In both Beijing and Shanghai, incidence of new breast cancer cases doubled in the 15 years between 1990 and 2005. Nationwide, breast cancer mortality has more than doubled in recent decades and the disease now causes more than 130 deaths every day.



Over half of women diagnosed
are younger than 50



Breast cancer was once considered a disease that mainly affected women after menopause, in their 60s and 70s. But today, well over half of all women diagnosed with breast cancer in China are younger than 50.

When breast cancer is detected early and treated effectively, more than 8 out of 10 women can expect to live long, healthy lives. But it is estimated that two out of

five new breast cancer cases in China are not diagnosed until the disease has reached more advanced stages, where survival rates are significantly lower (see page 5).

Programs for screening and treatment

China's national, provincial, and city governments have implemented programs to help women get breast cancer detected, diagnosed, and treated at an early stage, reducing costs and improving patients' survival rates and quality of life.

Women between the ages of 35 and 64 in Beijing, Shanghai, and many other major cities are eligible for free breast cancer screening at either maternal and child health facilities or community health centers.



Many women from rural areas can also receive free screening in their home communities through the "Two-Cancer" project provided jointly by the National Health and Family Planning Commission and the All-China Women's Federation.

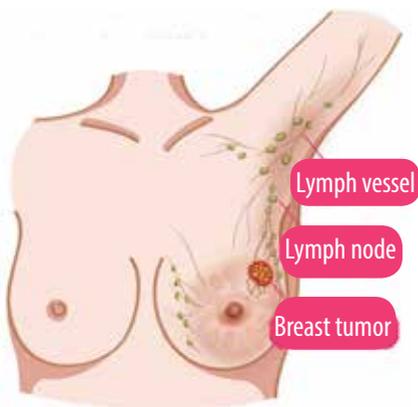
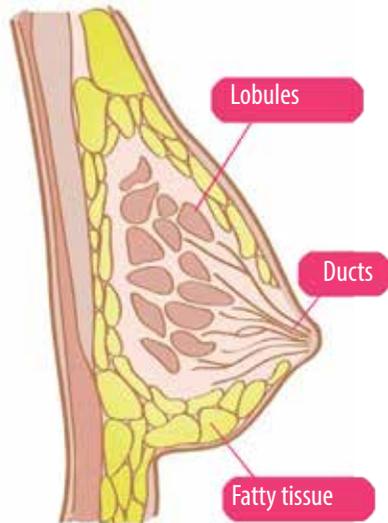
Other programs have been implemented to make treatment accessible and affordable for women diagnosed with breast cancer.

In Beijing and Shanghai, between 65 percent and 90 percent of the costs of treatment are covered under a combination of the Urban Residents Basic Medical Insurance (URBMI) and Catastrophic Medical Insurance coverage.

What is breast cancer?

Women's breasts are made up of glands (called lobules), ducts (small tubes that carry milk from the lobules to the nipple), fatty and connective tissue, blood vessels, and lymph vessels.

Breast cancer begins when normal breast cells start to grow faster and divide abnormally. Most cancers begin in the cells that line the ducts, some begin in the lobules, and a small number start in other tissues.



Breast cancer can then spread to the lymph nodes — small, bean-shaped groups of immune system cells located throughout the body and connected by lymph vessels. If it is not treated, breast cancer can then spread to other organs in the body.

There are several different types of breast cancer that may require different treatment approaches.

For all types of breast cancer, early detection and diagnosis are the keys to effective treatment and higher survival rates.



Breast cancer stages and outcomes

When breast cancer is diagnosed early, the treatment can be less invasive and costs less, and over 80 percent of patients recover to lead full, healthy lives. Later stage breast cancer means more complicated and expensive treatment and lower survival rates.

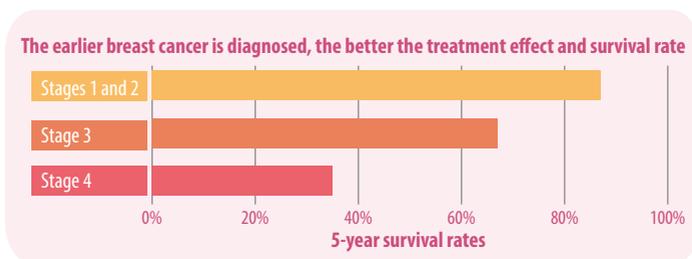
Breast cancer stages are based upon the size of the tumor in the breast, how many lymph nodes are involved, and whether it has spread to other parts of the body.

In Stage 1, the tumor is less than 2 cm across (the size of a black bean). In Stage 2, the tumor is larger than 2 cm but smaller than 5 cm (a lime), and cancer may have spread to some lymph nodes.

The goal of breast cancer awareness and education is to find and diagnose tumors in these early stages, when

treatment is most effective. Over 80 percent of patients diagnosed at Stages 1 and 2 survive for more than 5 years.

In Stage 3 breast cancer, the tumor is bigger than 5 cm and cancer has spread to lymph nodes or the chest wall. Two-thirds of patients diagnosed at Stage 3 survive for longer than 5 years. But five-year survival falls below 50 percent if cancer is not diagnosed until Stage 4, when the disease has spread to other parts of the body such as bones or lungs.



Know the risk factors for breast cancer



A number of risk factors have been identified that are associated with an increased chance a woman will get breast cancer. Knowledge of risk factors is important because it can help women modify their lifestyles in ways that may reduce their risk for disease. Women who know they are at higher risk should also make it a priority to get regular breast exams from a doctor.

Some of the risk factors that could increase a woman's chances of getting breast cancer are:

- Older age — Breast cancer risk increases with age.
- Family history — Risk is higher for women whose mothers, sisters, or daughters have had breast cancer.
- Overweight — Women who are overweight or obese after menopause have a higher risk of breast cancer.
- Excessive alcohol use — Consumption of alcohol can increase estrogen levels and therefore the risk of cancer.
- Lack of physical activity — Studies show that exercise may reduce breast cancer risk.
- Never having children or having a first child after age 35.
- Little or no breastfeeding — Breastfeeding slightly lowers breast cancer risk, especially if it lasts for 18 months to two years.
- Younger age at first period (before age 12) or older age at menopause (age 55 or older).

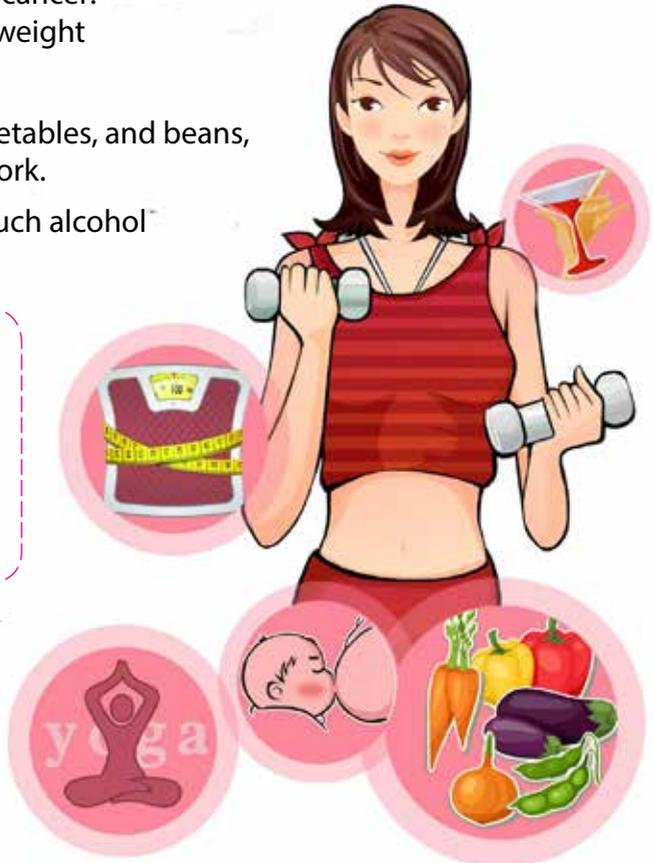
Adopt a healthy lifestyle that may reduce risk

There is no sure way to prevent breast cancer. But there are steps women can take that may reduce their risk and will increase the odds that if they do get breast cancer it is found early, when it can be treated effectively.

These lifestyle changes are beneficial for overall health and may reduce the risk of breast cancer:

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Be physically active
- Eat more fruits, vegetables, and beans, and less beef and pork.
- Do not drink too much alcohol
- Try to breastfeed

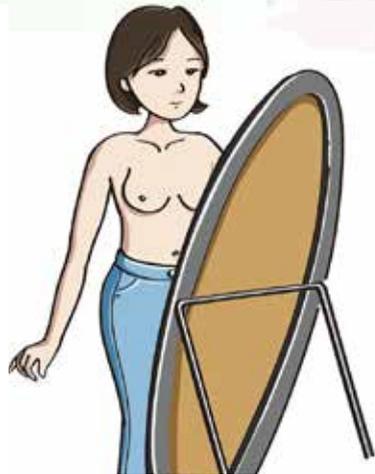
Most important of all, **get regular breast exams**. When breast cancer is diagnosed early and treated effectively, patients can live long, healthy lives.



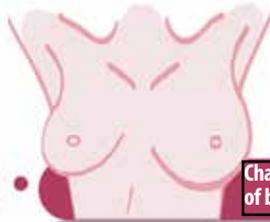
Watch for warning signs of breast cancer

Women themselves can help doctors detect breast cancer early by watching for changes in their breasts that could be warning signs and telling their doctors.

Women who notice any of the following symptoms, should get a check-up:



Breast lumps



Change in shape or size of breasts or nipples



Discharge from the nipple



Change in feel or color of breast skin

It is important to remember that early stage breast cancers are often hard to feel and painless. So women should get a breast exam every two years at least, even if they observe none of these warning signs.

Get regular breast exams

The most important thing women can do to detect breast cancer early is to get regular clinical breast exams and breast ultrasounds.

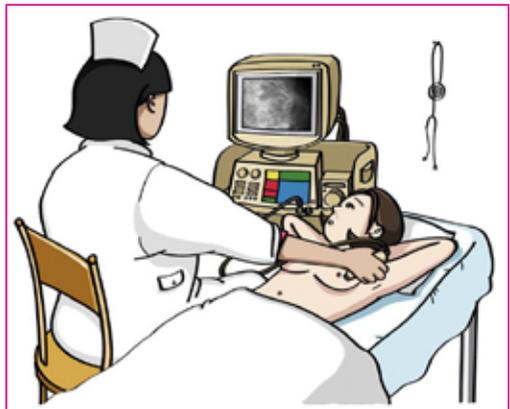


When you go to get a clinical breast exam, the doctor will start by looking at the breasts with the arms up and down.

The doctor will then examine the breasts, using his or her fingers to feel for possible lumps, with the woman both sitting and lying down. And the doctor will also examine the lymph nodes under the arm and near the collarbone to see if any of them are enlarged.

Breast ultrasound is another important way to detect breast cancer. Breast ultrasounds use sound waves and echoes to create a picture of the tissues inside the breast; no radiation is involved.

Both clinical breast exams and breast ultrasounds are painless. And both can detect cancers at an early stage, when they can be treated effectively.



Diagnosis of breast cancer

If the clinical breast exam detects a lump and the ultrasound image looks suspicious, then additional tests will be used to determine whether or not a woman has breast cancer. Most breast lumps turn out not to be cancer. Benign breast abnormalities are very common, especially among young women.

A mammogram (breast X-ray) can be used to confirm the presence of a suspicious breast mass. But only a biopsy can determine conclusively whether a lump is cancerous.

During a mammogram, the breast is pressed between two plates to flatten and spread the tissue. The pressure can be uncomfortable, but it lasts only a few seconds while the picture is taken.



In a biopsy, cells are removed with a needle or scalpel from the area of the breast where an abnormality has been found and studied in a lab. By looking at the cells under a microscope, doctors can determine whether the cells are benign or cancerous.

If breast cancer is found, the biopsy can also help doctors understand what type of cancer it is so that they can plan the most effective treatment.

Treatment of breast cancer

Especially when detected and diagnosed early, breast cancer can be treated effectively. Treatment for breast cancer includes some combination of surgery, chemotherapy, hormonal therapy, and/or radiation.

Surgery is usually done first, especially when the tumor is small and cancer has not spread. Either part or all of the breast will be removed, depending upon the size of the tumor. Additional surgery can be done afterwards to reconstruct the breast and make it look more natural. Once a woman has healed from surgery, she might have some mild soreness but should not experience any long-term, serious pain.

Chemotherapy is used to kill any cancer cells that might remain in the body. Getting chemotherapy generally does not hurt but often causes side effects. Common side effects include nausea, fatigue, and hair loss. It is important to remember that most of these side effects will disappear after the treatment ends. The hair you lost will grow back. Women can expect to resume their normal daily activities after (and often during) chemotherapy treatment.



The female hormone estrogen promotes the growth of breast cancer in some women. Hormonal therapy, using drugs that block estrogen or stop the body from producing it, can be used to treat breast cancer for these women.

Some women are also treated with radiation after surgery. In breast radiation, X-rays are used to kill any cancer cells that may remain in the breast. The side effects of breast radiation are fairly mild. Typically, women may experience fatigue and some temporary reddening and irritation to the skin (similar to sunburn), but there is no nausea or hair loss.

Overcoming barriers to early detection



Less than a third of Chinese women get regular breast exams, ultrasound, or mammography to screen for breast cancer. Women face many barriers in accessing these services including:

- Lack of information about breast cancer, including the fact that the disease can often be successfully treated when diagnosed early;
- Economic barriers, such as worries about being able to pay for treatment;
- Fear and stigma associated with a disease for which treatment often means surgical removal of a breast and temporary hair loss.

Health education and outreach workers can help women overcome these barriers by emphasizing five key messages:

1. Any woman can get breast cancer.
2. When it is detected early, breast cancer can be treated effectively.
3. The best ways to find breast cancer early are to watch for warning signs and get regular breast exams.
4. You can get free breast exams every two years at a Maternal and Child Health facility or community health center.
5. Call to action: See a doctor and get a breast exam if you notice any changes in your breasts.



Getting the message across

How you present information is as important as what you present. When conducting meetings or speaking with individual women about breast cancer,

- Start by asking questions in order to understand what women know, what they fear, and the reasons why they don't participate in screening.
- Present information about breast cancer clearly in plain language, drawing on training and outreach materials.
- Directly address the fears and beliefs women have expressed, emphasizing that if breast cancer is detected early it can be treated effectively.
- Use stories and testimonials to make information real, relevant, and emotionally connected to women's daily lives.
- Enable action by providing practical information women need in order to get a breast exam, including the name and location of the facility for screening and the schedule for when screening is available.



Effective outreach methods

Some of the best ways of presenting information and engaging women include:

- Presentations or lectures – The trainer gives a presentation or delivers a lecture covering key points. Presentations can be followed by a question and answer session. These can be useful for a small part of the session, but we encourage you to also use other approaches that engage women more actively, such as those mentioned below.
- Group discussion and problem-solving – Discuss barriers and common concerns that might discourage women from getting breast exams. Women can ask questions, or if they are not comfortable, can tell the trainer privately and have the question raised without being identified. Then encourage the group to brainstorm solutions.



Effective outreach methods

- Case studies – Tell a detailed story (either real or imagined) or invite participants to share their experiences with breast cancer screening, detection, treatment, or survivorship. Women can learn a lot from the experiences of people like them who have had breast exams or have been successfully treated for breast cancer.

- Role-plays – Have women act out skits in which they take on roles. For example, one participant can portray a woman who is reluctant to get a breast exam and another can play a health educator who is trying to convince her. At the end, the person leading the session can give feedback, and the rest of the group can offer suggestions. This can be a great way to get a group comfortable sharing common concerns and talking about sensitive issues.





Questions and answers



Why is it important to get breast exams regularly?

When breast cancer is detected early and treated effectively, the prognosis can be very good. But early-stage breast cancers are often painless and have no obvious symptoms. The best way to detect breast cancer early is by having a clinical breast exam and breast ultrasound.

How often should I get a breast exam?

After age 35, women should get their breasts examined every two years.

How much does a breast exam cost?

Breast exams are free for resident women between the ages of 35 and 64 in Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, and many other cities. Eligible women can get a breast exam at a Maternal and Child Health facility or a community health center. The All China Women's Federation and the National Center for Women's and Children's Health also organize annual free screening programs in rural communities once a year.

Is there anything I can do between breast exams to help detect any problems early?

Know what is normal for your breasts and watch for changes that could be warning signs of breast cancer. If you notice any breast lumps, changes in the shape or size of the nipple or breast, discharge from the nipple, or changes in the feel or color of the skin on your breast, don't wait for your next regular breast exam. Go for a check-up right away.

If I find a lump in my breast, do I have breast cancer?

*No, not necessarily. Most often lumps and other changes in your breasts are **NOT** cancer. But you should still go for a breast exam if you notice*



Questions and answers



a lump or other changes that could be signs of breast cancer. Only a doctor can determine whether or not a lump is cancerous by performing a clinical breast exam, a breast ultrasound, and a mammogram and biopsy if necessary.

If I am diagnosed with breast cancer, does that mean I am going to die?

No, it does not. Breast cancer can be treated effectively, especially if it is diagnosed early. Many women whose breast cancer is diagnosed early live long and healthy lives.

How is breast cancer treated?

Treatment for breast cancer includes some combination of surgery, chemotherapy, hormonal therapy, and/or radiation. Surgery is usually done first. Chemotherapy is used to kill any cancer cells that might remain in the body. Based on the specific situation of the patient and the type of cancer, doctors may also choose to use hormonal therapy to inhibit the estrogen that promotes the growth of some cancers, or use radiation to kill cancer cells that remain in the breast after a surgery.

If I get breast cancer, will I be able to get treatment without bankrupting my family?

Many programs exist to protect breast cancer patients against being driven into poverty. In Beijing and Shanghai, between 65 percent and 90 percent of the costs of treatment are covered under a combination of the Urban Residents Basic Medical Insurance (URBMI) program and Catastrophic Medical Insurance coverage.

We can fight back against breast cancer if we:

- Adopt healthy lifestyles
- Know the risk factors
- Watch for warning signs
- Get regular breast exams
- Detect and treat cancer at an early stage

Dear sisters — let us take action together, using knowledge and hope to combat the fear of diseases. Breast cancer need not terrify us. When it is diagnosed early and treated effectively, many patients can enjoy long, healthy, beautiful, and happy lives!

