

BREAST HEALTH ISSUES COMMON MYTHS & FACTS

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Dr. P. Raghu Ram, a triple FRCS from Edinburgh, Glasgow and Ireland underwent subspecialty training in breast surgery at world renowned centers of excellence in United Kingdom. His mother, Dr. Ushalakshmi, a practicing obstetrician and gynaecologist from Hyderabad was diagnosed with early stage breast cancer in 2002. Even though he had lucrative career opportunities, awaiting in the UK, Dr. Raghu Ram returned to India in September 2007 with a vision and a mission.

He has, since then, conceived, designed and established the Centre for Breast Diseases at Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS) – The first of its kind in India. He has also established a Breast Cancer Foundation.

A number of innovative and unique initiatives were introduced under Dr. Raghu Ram's leadership as the CEO of Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation that to raise awareness amongst women about the importance of breast awareness in early detection of breast cancer.





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By,

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MYTH Most breast lumps are cancerous

FACT 9 out of 10 breast lumps are not cancerous. However it is vitally important to investigate any breast lumps in order to obtain a definitive diagnosis instead of assuming that they are harmless.

MYTH Breast cancer affects only older women

FACT 80% of breast cancers occur in women over the age of 50. However Breast cancer can occur at any age & is being increasingly diagnosed in women over the age of 40.

MYTH Men do not get breast cancer

FACT Many people are unaware that men too can develop breast cancer, because they do not think of men as having breasts. In fact, both men and women have breast tissue. It is important to be aware that a small proportion of men do get breast cancer each year. Although precise statistics in India are unknown, approximately 300 new cases of breast cancer are diagnosed in men each year in the United Kingdom.

MYTH We know what causes Breast cancer

FACT We do not know what causes Breast cancer. There are, however, well recognised risk factors. Being a woman and increasing age are the two most important risk factors.

Other known risk factors are:

- Previously diagnosed cancer in a breast.
- Family history of breast cancer (close relatives with breast cancer).
- Early onset of menstrual period (before age 12).
- Late menopause (after age 55).
- Not having children or having the first child after the age of 30.
- Long term use of hormone replacement therapy.
- Obesity (especially after menopause).

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MYTH If you are in the high risk category for breast cancer, you are likely to get the disease.

FACT Getting breast cancer is not a certainty, even if you have one of the strongest risk factors.

MYTH Family history of breast cancer is the most likely indicator for breast cancer.

FACT The vast majority of women with breast cancer do not have a family history of breast cancer. Strong family history (genetic predisposition) accounts for only 10% of breast cancer.

MYTH Breast feeding prevents Breast cancer.

FACT Breast feeding does not prevent breast cancer, but reduces the risk.

MYTH Birth control pills causes Breast cancer

FACT Modern day birth control pills contain a low dose of oestrogen and progesterone & hence are not associated with an increased risk of getting breast cancer

MYTH Women with large breasts have greater risk of developing breast cancer

FACT Size of the breast is not a factor.

MYTH Injury to the Breast can cause breast cancer

FACT Injury to the Breast does not cause the breast cancer.

MYTH Breast cancer can not be detected early

FACT It can. In fact breast cancer is treatable and curable if detected early.

MYTH Breast Self Examination is the same as Breast Awareness

FACT Breast Self Examination (BSE) is a regular and repetitive monthly self examination of breasts performed by a

woman at the same time each month in a set method. BSEs have not proven to be beneficial.

Breast Awareness is becoming familiar with one's breasts and how they change throughout a woman's life. It encourages women to be familiar with their breasts so that they are quick to notice any change which might help detect breast cancer early. Breast Awareness, as a concept, is gaining acceptance world over.

MYTH Breast cancer can not be detected unless a lump is found in the breast

FACT Breast cancer can be detected many years before a lump is felt in the breast by doing a Mammography (X ray of the breast).

MYTH Mammograms are 100% accurate in diagnosing breast cancer

FACT Mammograms are the most efficient way of detecting breast cancer early. But, like other screening test, they are not perfect. The accuracy of the mammography is around 85%.

The reasons are:

- Some cancers are very difficult to see on a Mammogram
- Some cancers even though they are present, can not be seen on a Mammogram
- The person reading the Mammogram might miss the cancer (This does happen occasionally, no matter how experienced the diagnostician is)

MYTH Breast cancer screening is effective in all age groups

FACT Breast cancer screening is effective only in women over the age of 40. Routine breast screening for women without any symptoms under the age of 40 has not yet been proven to be effective.