

# Breast Cancer can be battled

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**W**ith over 1,00,000 cases being diagnosed each year, the incidence of breast cancer in India is rising at an alarming rate. Breast cancer has become the most common cancer affecting women. As October is internationally recognised as Breast Cancer Awareness Month let's start by dispelling some common myths.

**Myth:** All breast lumps are cancers.

**Fact:** Nine out of 10 breast lumps are not cancers. However, it is important to investigate the lump and obtain a diagnosis.

**Myth:** Breast cancer affects older women.

**Fact:** Eighty per cent of breast cancers do occur in women over the age of 50. However, breast cancer can occur at any age.

**Myth:** Breast cancer does not occur in men.

**Fact:** Men can develop breast cancer too, as both men and women have breast tissue.

**Myth:** We know what causes breast cancer.

**Fact:** We do not know the exact cause but there are well recognised risk factors. Being a woman and increasing age are the two most important risk factors.

OTHER KNOWN RISK FACTORS ARE:

- Previously diagnosed breast cancer
- Family history of breast cancer
- Early onset of menstrual period
- 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

**Myth:** Breast feeding prevents cancer.

**Fact:** Breast feeding only reduces the risk but does not prevent breast cancer.

**Myth:** Birth control pills cause cancer.

**Fact:** Modern day birth control pills con-

tain low doses of oestrogen and progesterone and do not increase the risk of getting breast cancer.

**Myth:** Women with large breasts have greater risk of developing breast cancer.

**Fact:** The size is definitely not a risk factor.

**Myth:** Injury to the breast can cause cancer.

**Fact:** Injury does not cause breast cancer.

**Myth:** Breast cancer is not curable.

**Fact:** It is treatable if detected early.

**Myth:** BSE is breast awareness.

**Fact:** Breast self examination (BSE) is a monthly self examination of the breasts. But breast awareness is about becoming familiar with the breasts and the changes it goes through. It encourages women to know their breasts, so that they can notice any change which might help detect breast cancer early.

CHANGES TO LOOK OUT FOR:

- Change in size
- Change in position or shape of nipple
- Rash on or around the nipple
- Discharge from one or both nipples
- Swelling under the armpit or around the collarbone
- Puckering of the skin
- A lump in your breast
- Pain in one part of the breast or armpit.

**Myth:** Mammography is 100 per cent accurate.

**Fact:** This is the most efficient way of detecting cancer but like other screening tests, isn't perfect.

**BREAST SCREENING EXPLAINED:** Mammography is an X-ray examination. It can show breast cancers at an early stage, but is effective only in women over the age of 40 years. It involves a tiny dose of radiation. Some find the procedure uncomfortable. Pain lasts only during procedure.

*If you have any questions, please contact:  
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**Breast Cancer Awareness Month**

