



Woman and Breast Cancer - Early Detection Saves Life

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I am finally getting the chance to do something I've wanted to do for a while. With the increase in the number of breast cancer cases in India, the fear of cancer is on the rise. So here are some alarming facts about breast cancer in India that will help patients understand breast cancer and the reason to opt for a personalized treatment.

Worldwide, breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed life-threatening cancer in women and the leading cause of cancer death among women.

Breast Cancer is the most common cancer in Indian women and accounts for 27% of all cancers in women. About 1 in 28 women are likely to develop breast cancer during their lifetime. In the urban areas the incidence is 1 in 22 as compared to the rural areas where 1 in 60 women develop breast cancer. Breast cancer patients experience physical symptoms and psychosocial distress that adversely affect their quality of life (QOL).

Breast Cancer statistics of 2019 recorded 1,62,468 new registered cases and 87,090 reported deaths. Breast cancer accounts for 25 - 32% of female cancers in all cities across India. In India, one woman is diagnosed with breast cancer every 4 minutes. One woman dies of breast cancer, every 13 minutes in India.

Risk factors for developing breast cancer include being female, obesity, a lack of physical exercise, alcoholism, hormone replacement therapy during menopause, ionizing radiation, an early age at first menstruation, having children late in life or not at all, older age, having a prior history of breast cancer, and a family history of breast cancer.

One of the most common symptoms of Breast Cancer is formation of a lump in the breast. A painless, hard mass in the breast with irregular edges is also a sign of Breast Cancer. Some other early symptoms of Breast Cancer include nipple retraction, discharge from nipple, redness of breast skin or of the nipple, skin irritation or dimpling, unexplained change in shape or size of the breast, changes in skin, changes in thickness of nipples and in advance stage blood stained discharge from nipples and bone pain.

Although breast cancer was known in ancient times, it was uncommon until the 19th century, when improvements in sanitation and control of deadly infectious diseases resulted in dramatic increases in lifespan. Previously, most women had died too young to have developed breast cancer. Additionally, early and frequent childbearing and breastfeeding probably reduced the rate of breast cancer development in those women who did survive to middle age.

Breast cancer cannot be prevented but it can surely be treated within time if diagnosed early. Awareness about breast cancer is incredibly important as early detection, often through screening, can catch the disease when it is most treatable. October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, an annual campaign to increase awareness of the disease. Spreading awareness is the best way to protect our sisters from these disease and save precious lives.

Breast cancer typically has no symptoms when the tumour is small and easily treated. So breast cancer screening in an attempt to achieve an earlier diagnosis under the assumption that early detection will improve outcomes. A number of screening tests have been employed including clinical and self breast examination, mammography, genetic screening, ultrasound, and magnetic resonance imaging.

Women should be encouraged and taught self breast examination, after 20 years of age and clinical examination after 30 years of age to identify any lump in their breasts, painful or painless and immediately consult physician to rule out cancer.

“No matter what the statistics say, there is always a way”. ~Bernie Siegel.

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