



BREAST HEALTH

AWARENESS



**A NATIONAL AFRICAN  
AMERICAN BREAST CANCER  
SURVIVORSHIP ORGANIZATION**

# African American Breast Cancer Facts\*\*

- 🎗 In 2013, an estimated 27,060 new cases of breast cancer and 6,080 deaths are expected to occur among African American women.\*\*
- 🎗 Breast cancer is the most common cancer among African American women and the second leading cause of cancer deaths among this ethnic group, surpassed only by lung cancer.
- 🎗 African American women's five-year survival rate of breast cancer is 78%, compared to white women's rate of 90%. \*\*
- 🎗 The incidence of breast cancer among women under 45 is higher for African American women compared to white women; however, the risk of breast cancer for all women increases with age.
- 🎗 African American women have the lowest cause-specific survival rate of any racial or ethnic group, indicating that they have the greatest probability of dying of breast cancer. \*\*
- 🎗 African American women are more likely to be diagnosed with larger tumors and more advanced stages of breast cancer despite a lower incidence rate.
- 🎗 The risk of breast cancer for all women increases with age.

It is important to know that risk of breast cancer for all women increases with age. Early detection is very important for African American women.

*\*\*American Cancer Society, Cancer Facts and Figures 2013-2014*



# Breast Cancer Assistance Program (BCAP)

The Breast Cancer Assistance Program (BCAP) provides financial assistance to breast cancer survivors in treatment for, but not limited to: **medical related lodging, co-pay, office visits and prosthesis**. BCAP is also an early detection program which provides free mammograms to non-survivors and survivors.

## Risk Factors

- ✧ Gender
- ✧ Aging
- ✧ Genetic
- ✧ Family history
- ✧ Personal history
- ✧ Race and ethnicity
- ✧ Dense breast tissue
- ✧ Certain benign breast conditions
- ✧ Hormone therapy after menopause
- ✧ Alcohol
- ✧ Being overweight or obese
- ✧ Absence of physical activity

## Signs & Symptoms

- ✧ Breast cancer lumps vary and may be hard or soft and have rounded or uneven edges
- ✧ Swelling of all or part of the breast
- ✧ Skin irritation or dimpling
- ✧ Nipple retraction (turning inward)
- ✧ Redness or scaliness of the nipple or breast skin
- ✧ Nipple discharge (other than breast milk)
- ✧ A lump or swelling in the underarm area

# Early Detection Guidelines



**Mammogram:** Women 40 years and older should have a screening mammogram every year. If your mother or sister has had breast cancer, you may need to get a mammogram earlier and more frequently.

**Clinical Breast Exam:** Women between 20 and 39 years old should have clinical breast exam by a healthcare professional at least once every three years. Women ages 40 and older should have a clinical breast exam every year.

**Monthly Breast Self-Exam (BSE):** Women 20 years and older should do a monthly breast self-exam.

**Ultrasound:** An ultrasound is used to determine if a lump is a solid mass or a fluid-filled cyst. Clinicians use ultrasound to help determine if a lump is normal or abnormal.

**Breast Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI):** Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), uses magnetic fields instead of x-rays to create a picture. An MRI produces clearer images of your breast to help detect abnormalities.

# Monthly Breast Self Exam

**Lie down:** Lie down and place your right arm behind your head. The exam is done while lying down, not standing up. This is because when lying down the breast tissue spreads evenly over the chest wall



and is as thin as possible, making it easier to feel all the breast tissue.

Use the finger pads of the 3 middle fingers on your left hand to feel for lumps in the right breast. Use overlapping dime-sized circular motions of the finger pads to feel the breast tissue. Repeat the exam on your left breast, using the finger pads of the right hand.

**In front of a mirror:** While standing in front of a mirror with your hands pressing firmly down on your hips, look at your breasts for any changes of size, shape, contour, dimpling, redness or scaliness of the nipple or breast skin. (The pressing down on the hips position contracts the chest wall muscles and enhances any breast changes.)



**Standing up:** Examine each underarm while sitting up or standing and with your arm only slightly raised so you can easily feel in this area. Raising your arm

straight up tightens the tissue in this area, making it difficult to examine. Use 3 different levels of pressure to feel all the breast tissue. Light pressure is needed to feel the tissue closest to the skin; medium pressure to feel a little deeper; and firm pressure to feel the tissue closest to the chest and ribs. It is normal to feel a firm ridge in the lower curve of each breast, but you should tell your doctor if you feel anything else out of the ordinary. If you're not sure how hard to press, talk with your doctor or nurse. Use each pressure level to feel the breast tissue before moving on to the next spot.

Move around the breast in an up and down pattern starting at an imaginary line drawn straight down your side from the underarm and moving across the breast to the middle of the chest bone (sternum or breastbone). Be sure to check the entire breast area going down until you feel only ribs and up to the neck or collar bone (clavicle).



# Triple Negative\*

Triple Negative breast cancer is shown to disproportionately affect young African American women.

Triple Negative is used to describe breast cancers (usually invasive ductal carcinomas) whose cells do not have estrogen receptors and progesterone receptors, and do not have an excess of the HER2 protein on their surfaces. Breast cancers with these characteristics tend to occur more often in younger women and in African American women. They also tend to grow and spread more quickly than most other types of breast cancer. Because the tumor cells lack these receptors, neither hormone therapy nor drugs that target HER2 are effective against these cancers (although chemotherapy may be useful if needed). It can also be highly aggressive in younger African American women (premenopausal).

*\*American Cancer Society*

## Donation



To make a donation, visit [www.sistersnetworkinc.org](http://www.sistersnetworkinc.org) to help in the fight against breast cancer.

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