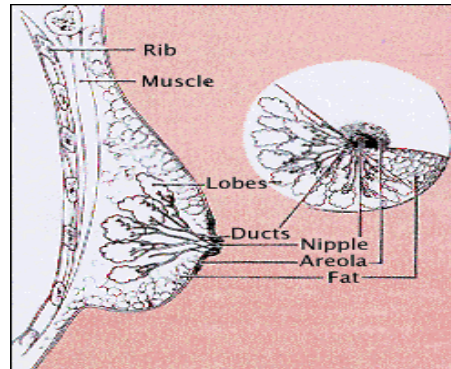


## Breast Cancer Information Sheet

**What is Breast Cancer?** Breast cancer begins in the tissue of the breast. It is the overgrowth of abnormal cells in the breast (also known as a malignant tumor of the breast). Inside the breasts are glands (lobes) that produce and release milk after a woman has a baby. The tubes that connect the lobes to the nipple, where milk is released, are called ducts. The breast itself is made up of lobes, ducts, and fatty, connective and lymphatic tissue. Breast cancer can occur in any part of the breast region.



### **Facts:**

- Breast cancer rates increase with successive generations of Asians living in the U.S.<sup>1</sup>
- Women of Asian/Pacific Islander ancestry have experienced a 15% increase in incidence of invasive breast cancer between 1988 and 1997<sup>φ</sup>
- Breast cancer detection among Asian American women tends to occur at a later stage than in white women (ACS)
- Breast cancer survival rates tend to be lower among diagnosed Asian American women than in white women.<sup>1</sup>
- When detected early, breast cancer can be successfully treated<sup>2</sup>
- Breast cancer is most common among Chinese, Filipina, Hawaiian, Japanese and Korean women, but can affect ALL ASIAN WOMEN.<sup>3</sup>
- When breast cancer is detected at an earlier stage, the 5 year survival rate is very high (about 97%). If found at a later stage after it has spread to other organs, survival rates significantly decrease.<sup>4</sup>

### **Who is at risk? (www.cancer.org)**

- All women, even Asians, especially those over the age of 50
- Women with a family history of breast cancer (mother or sister)
- Personal history of benign breast disease
- Late age (30) of first pregnancy or never bearing children
- Early beginning of menstruation or late menopause
- Those with a high fat intake, or those who are obese

<sup>1</sup> Stanford J, et al (1995) Breast cancer incidence in Asian migrants to the United States and their descendants. *Epidemiology*, 6(2):181-183.

<sup>φ</sup> California Cancer Facts & Figures 2001, American Cancer Society

## **Signs and Symptoms**

Breast cancer may have no symptoms in the early stages, therefore it is important to have routine screenings even if you do not experience any symptoms (which may indicate advanced disease):

- A lump or mass in the breast or the underarm area.
- A change in breast size, shape or color
- A discharge from the nipple
- A change in the feel of the skin covering the breast (the skin could become dimpled, puckered or scaly)<sup>5</sup>

## **Screening Guidelines**

Because early breast cancer does not produce symptoms, it is important for all women to follow the guidelines for finding breast cancer early. These include the following:

- A mammogram and a Clinical Breast Exam (CBE) by a doctor or nurse every year for women over the age 40.
- Between the ages of 20 and 39, women should have a clinical breast exam every 3 years.
- All women over 20 should do breast self- examination (BSE) every month.

## **Description of Tests:** [www.cancernet.org](http://www.cancernet.org)

Breast Self Examination: the examination of one's own breasts is called breast self-examination, (BSE). Studies so far have shown that BSE alone reduces the number of deaths from breast cancer. However, it should **NOT** be used in place of clinical breast examination and mammography.

Clinical Breast Examination: during your routine physical examination, your doctor or health care professional may do a clinical breast examination (CBE). During a CBE, your doctor will carefully feel your breasts and under your arms to check for lumps or other unusual changes.

Mammogram: a mammogram is a special x-ray of the breast that can often find tumors that are too small for you or your doctor to feel. During the test, the breast is compressed to spread the tissue apart and to allow a lower dose of x-ray. Although this may be temporarily uncomfortable, it is necessary in order to produce a good mammogram. The compression is only in place a few seconds of the examination and the entire procedure for screening mammography takes about 20 minutes.

## **References:**

- 1) AAPCHO- [www.aapcho.com](http://www.aapcho.com)
- 2) American Cancer Society Cancer Facts for Women
- 3) [www.apiahf.org/cancerfacts.html](http://www.apiahf.org/cancerfacts.html) 11/19/00
- 4) [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)
- 5) [www.yourcancerrisk.harvard.edu](http://www.yourcancerrisk.harvard.edu)
- 6) [www.cancernet.org](http://www.cancernet.org)

