



## Use your benefits wisely and save money

### October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among American women, other than skin cancer. It is the second leading cause of cancer death in women, after lung cancer. The 2011 estimates for breast cancer in the United States are that 230,480 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed in women and about 39,520 women will die from breast cancer.

**You may be able to lower your risk of breast cancer by making healthy lifestyle choices.** Besides possibly reducing the risk of breast cancer, lifestyle improvements are smart steps for a healthier life since they can help prevent heart disease, diabetes, and many other chronic, life-threatening conditions.

- Decrease your daily fat intake—especially saturated or hydrogenated fats. Eat leaner meats and limit red meat.
- Increase fiber in your diet—Fiber is found in whole grains, vegetables, and fruit.
- Eat fresh fruits and vegetables
- Limit alcohol
- Stay active—Engage in a moderate amount of physical activity on most days of the week. Strive to maintain the body weight recommended by a health professional, since excess fat may stimulate estrogen production.
- Don't smoke—although smoking doesn't cause breast cancer, it can increase the chance of blood clots, heart disease, and other cancers that may spread to the breast.

**Your best chance for treating breast cancer successfully is catching it early.** The earlier breast cancer is found, the more likely it is that treatment will be successful. Screening recommendations for early breast cancer detection are:

- Starting at age 20, women should have clinical breast exams. Women in their 20s and 30s should have a clinical breast exam as part of a periodic (regular) health exam by a health professional, at least every 3 years. After age 40, women should have a breast exam by a health professional every year.
- Women age 40 and older should have a screening mammogram every year and should continue to do so for as long as they are in good health. **Note: Screening mammograms are covered 100% on the CARES health plan.**
- Breast self-exam (BSE) is not recommended as a screening tool for breast cancer. However, Susan G. Komen for the Cure® recommends that you become familiar with the way your breasts normally look and feel. Knowing what is normal for you may help you see or feel changes in your breast.

Sources: American Cancer Society, Susan G. Komen for the Cure, and National Breast Cancer Awareness Month

### How to make the most of your doctor visit

**You may only have a few minutes with the doctor during your visit, so here are a few tips that can help:**

- ◇ Bring a list of your questions and concerns.
- ◇ Bring a list of all your medicines (including over-the-counter medicine and supplements) and how much you take of each one.
- ◇ Be ready to give your health history and any allergies you have along with the symptoms you are experiencing.
- ◇ Ask questions and take notes.
- ◇ Repeat what your doctor tells you in your own words, to make sure you understand.
- ◇ Follow up if you have questions, experience side effects, or if your symptoms get worse.
- ◇ Bring someone with you for support.
- ◇ Take an active role in the decisions about your health care and treatment plan.
- ◇ Learn about your diagnosis by finding out more about the condition and how to control or treat it.

If you don't understand your diagnosis or want a second opinion, call Best Doctors 1-866-904-0910

### New Weapon Against Cancer: Exercise

Doctors used to tell cancer patients to rest and save their energy. Research now shows that exercise is a strong tool for fighting the disease.

Movement improves quality of life and it also lowers the risk of some types of cancer, including cancer of the breast, cervix, ovaries and uterus.

Always ask your doctor about beginning any exercise program and for help designing workouts geared to your age and cancer type.

Source: American Cancer Society, Clinical Journal of Oncology

**Did you know?** The five year survival rate for breast cancer caught in the early stages is better than 85%. Currently there are more than 2.6 million breast cancer survivors in the United States.

*-American Cancer Society*

CARES CommonSense is a publication of Collegiate Association Resource of the Southwest, Inc.

The information in CARES Connection is intended to complement the advice of your health care provider and not to replace it. Before making any changes in your medication, diet or exercise, consult with your health care professional.

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