

Breast Cancer: It Can Happen to Men, Too!

What did “Shaft” actor Richard Roundtree, NFL great Ernie Green, and “Price Is Right” announcer Rod Roddy, have in common? All 3 men have fought breast cancer, a disease that does not discriminate.

Breast cancer, with its nationwide pink ribbon campaign, is usually regarded as a woman's disease, even though more than 400 men die from it every year. Breast cancer is diagnosed in over 2,000 men in the United States each year.

Breast cancer is the same in men and women. Just like women, men have breast tissue that can develop abnormal cancerous cells. For both genders, family history is a significant risk factor—between 5% - 10% of men who have been diagnosed had a history of it in their family. Ernie Green's two older sisters were diagnosed with breast cancer, and one of them died from the disease after it returned. Age and genetic predisposition are, among many others, additional risk factors.



Be Aware:

Lack of awareness about male breast cancer can be fatal – men with breast cancer often mistake visible lumps for other problems or ignore them until it is too late; embarrassment and social stigma can also contribute to later diagnosis. Cancer found at a later stage may be less likely to be effectively treated.

The earlier breast cancer is diagnosed, the more likely it is that treatments will be effective - no matter what gender you are.

The Facts:

Breast Cancer: Not just a women's disease

Like women, men can develop breast cancer, a disease in which malignant (cancer) cells form in the tissues of the breast.

- Male breast cancer is most common in aging men.
- More than 2,000 men are diagnosed with breast cancer each year
- Although less common than other male cancers, the death rate is significantly higher. Breast cancer can claim the lives of over 25% of those diagnosed.
- With early detection, breast cancer is treatable *and* beatable



Risk Factors

Factors that may make you more susceptible to breast cancer include:

- Age: Men are at higher risk as they grow older
- Family History: Between 5% - 10% of men who have been diagnosed have a history of it in their family, a mother or sister with breast cancer
- Radiation exposure
- Regular use of estrogen-related drugs
- Liver disease



Symptoms/Detection

Treatment and survival for men with breast cancer are promising when the disease is diagnosed early. You should schedule a medical appointment if you notice any of these symptoms:

- A lump or thickening (often painless) in the breast that can be felt
- Skin dimpling or puckering
- Nipple retraction (turning inward)
- Redness or scaling of the nipple or breast skin
- Spontaneous clear or bloody discharge from the nipple

Treatment

Treatment of male breast cancer is the same as treatment for female patients and usually includes a combination of surgery, radiation, chemotherapy and/or hormone therapy.



Prevention

You may be able to decrease your risk of breast cancer by:

- Limiting alcohol consumption
- Staying physically active
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Practicing self examination

A Woman's Role

Women can help the men in their lives with awareness and early detection of breast cancer using the 3 Rs:

1. **R**emind
 - Encourage and remind the men in your lives to perform self-breast exams, just as you do. Have you found the shower a convenient time and place for self-breast exams? Share the tip!
2. **R**ecognize
 - Men often confuse their symptoms with a sports or work injury. Because they are less likely to recognize or report warning signs, they are usually diagnosed at later stages and many times after the disease has spread.
3. **R**einforce
 - A lot of men who notice symptoms may be put off by going to the doctor because they believe a “real man” wouldn’t get breast cancer. That kind of attitude can be prevented with a healthy support system. Reinforce the importance of checking out anything unusual with a doctor as soon as possible.

Resources

Male Breast Cancer Resource Center – www.MaleBreastCancerResourceCenter.com

Men's Health Resource Center – www.MensHealthResourceCenter.com

Susan G. Komen Foundation – www.komen.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast

American Cancer Society – www.cancer.org – 800-ACS-2345

National Cancer Institute – www.cancer.gov – 800-4-CANCER (800-422-6237)

Get It Checked – www.GetItChecked.com