



October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month! It is important time to raise awareness and encourage prevention. So with FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23RD being WEAR PINK DAY the Wellness Leaders Committee is asking for everyone to Wear Pink to not only promote prevention, but to celebrate and honor everyone touched by this disease!

While breast cancer is most commonly associated with women, we should all be aware that women aren't the only ones who suffer from breast cancer. There are others, those who are male, as well as those who are gender fluid, nonbinary, and transgender, who are also at risk and suffer with this devastating disease.

With this thought in mind, we need to rethink how we talk about breast cancer and breast cancer awareness. Not everyone uses the term “breast” when referring to that area of the body. There are many people who prefer to use a different term, like chest. Sometimes, referring to a trans or nonbinary person's chest area as breasts can be triggering and cause dysphoria. Also, many transgender men feel disconnected with their breasts and have surgery to remove their breasts so their bodies reflect their true gender. They may feel this protects them from this type of cancer in the future, but that is not always the case.

So, following this mindset, below you will find early signs of cancer and tips on prevention for this area of the body no matter how you refer to it or what your gender identity may be. Also, to include every gender, chest/breast will be used instead of just breast throughout the rest of the article.

Follow these 8 tips for chest/breast health.

- Perform monthly self-exams – This is your chance to take an active role in your health and prevention. The exam is the same for all genders.
 - How to perform a self-exam:
 - Check each side of the chest individually.
 - Use your right hand fingers to check your left side and your left hand fingers to check your right side.
 - With your fingers flat against the skin, press firmly in small, clockwise circles.

- Start at the outermost top edge of your chest and spiral towards the nipple.
 - Feel for hard lumps or bumps in your tissue and be certain to cover all parts of your chest. DON'T FORGET – check under the arms and into the armpit as well as the tissue of your chest extends into that area.
 - Gently squeeze both nipples and look for any discharge.
 - Look carefully for changes in the size, shape, and contour of each breast or side of your chest, e.g., puckering, dimpling, or changes in skin texture.
- Regular checkups and tests designed for you and your gender as not everyone can have a mammogram completed – Regular checkups and tests are especially important for those with one or more risk factors and those over a certain age.
 - Breasts need support – so be certain to support your chest the way it should be based on your gender identity.
 - Maintain a safe weight and avoid obesity
 - Exercise regularly – The American Heart Association recommends that individuals do moderate exercise for at least 150 minutes per week, or 75 minutes per week of vigorous exercise.
 - Reduce fat intake and eat fruits, vegetables and other high fiber foods
 - Keep alcohol consumption to a minimum – Alcohol is considered a macronutrient in that it provides energy (about 7 calories per gram). The equivalent of a 1-ounce shot of liquor is approximately 80 to 90 calories.
 - Stop smoking – Smoking is the main culprit in heart disease, strokes, bronchitis and emphysema, and gastric ulcers and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and various diseases including chest/breast cancer.

If you have any of the following early signs or symptoms of chest/breast cancer, you should speak to your doctor. Also, if you have a personal history of cancer; a family history; or you are an individual who was born female and have no children or your first child was born after you turned 30, be sure to follow the guidelines for an increased risk of cancer which can be discussed with a medical professional.

Early signs or symptoms of chest/breast cancer

- Symptoms of chest/breast tumors vary from person to person. Some common, early warning signs of include:
 - Skin changes, such as swelling, redness, or other visible differences in one or both breasts or sides of the chest
 - An increase in size or change in shape of the chest/breast(s)
 - Changes in the appearance of one or both nipples
 - Nipple discharge other than milk from a lactating individual
 - General pain in/on any part of the chest/breast
 - Lumps or nodes felt on or inside of the chest/breast

Let's all take a stand in caring for ourselves, our families, and our communities.