

Breast Cancer Awareness

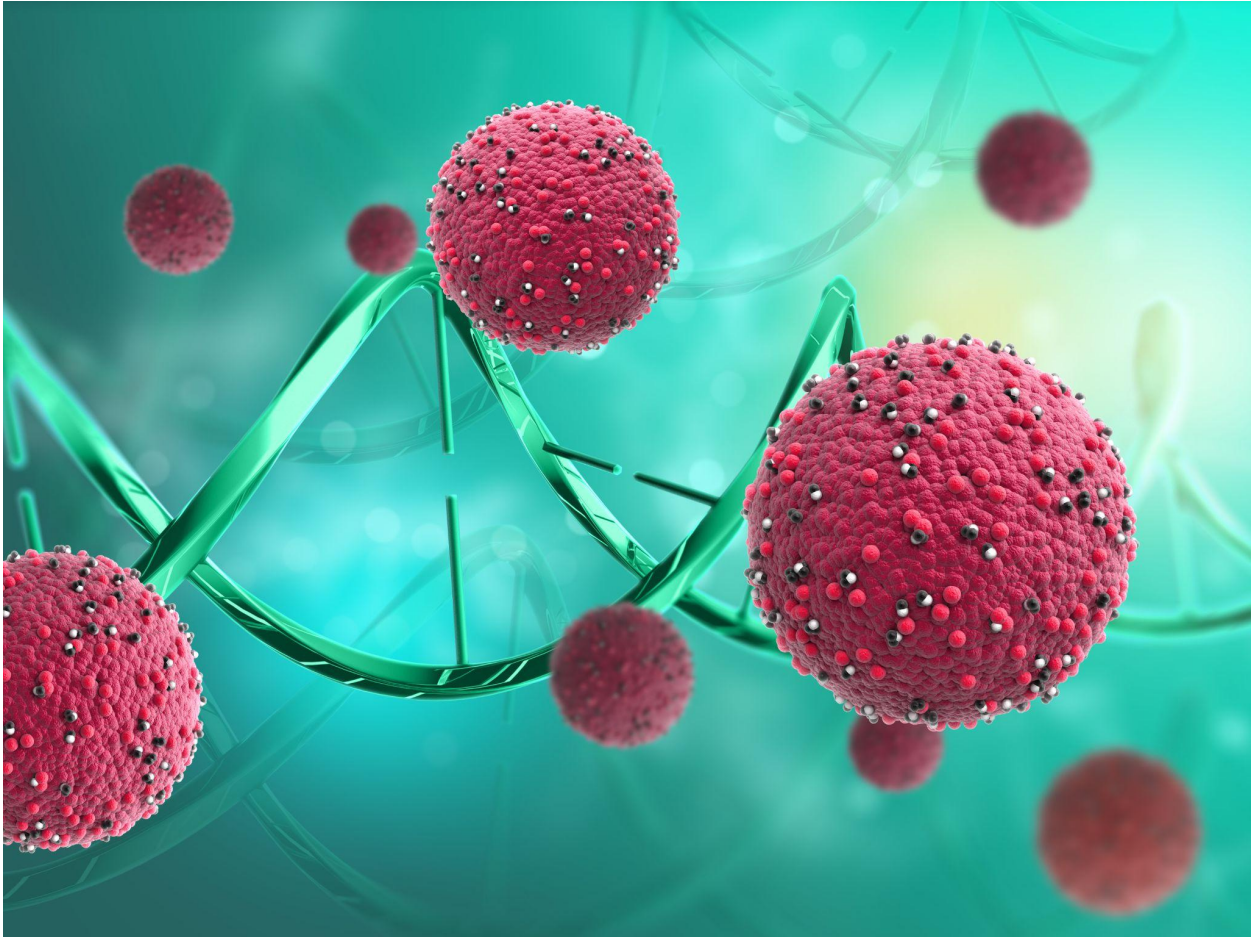


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What is Cancer?



In the human body, there are around 37.2 trillion cells. Human cells grow and multiply through cell division and form new cells in the body. The old or damaged cells die, and new cells replace them. But when the old or damaged cells do not die and multiply and form new abnormal cells, this is when cancer occurs.

To put it simply, cancer is when there is an uncontrollable growth of abnormal cells in the human body. With time, these cells form a mass of tissue known as tumours. However, not all cancers occur due to tumours.

What is Breast Cancer?



As the name suggests, breast cancer is the cancer that forms in the cells of the breasts. “Breast cancer occurs only in women” is a very common myth as breast cancer also occurs in men, but it is far less common than in women.

Breast cancer occurs when a cancer cell in the breast goes undetected by the immune system, and it divides and increases the number of abnormal cells in the breast. There are different types of breast cancer. The kind depends on which cell turned into a cancer cell in the breast.

Types of Breast Cancer



There are various types of breast cancer. The list includes:

- Invasive ductal carcinoma
- Invasive lobular carcinoma
- Inflammatory breast cancer
- Paget's disease of the nipple
- Phyllodes tumours of the breast
- Locally advanced breast cancer
- Metastatic breast cancer
- Triple negative breast cancer
- Hormone receptor positive breast cancer
- HER2 positive breast cancer

The most common types are invasive ductal carcinoma and invasive lobular carcinoma, with invasive ductal carcinoma accounting for 70-80% of all breast cancers. The least common are Paget's disease, Phyllodes tumours and Inflammatory breast cancer.

The most deadliest and difficult cancers to treat are Triple negative breast cancer and Metastatic Breast Cancer. Metastatic breast cancer, in particular, is the deadliest.

Causes of Breast Cancer

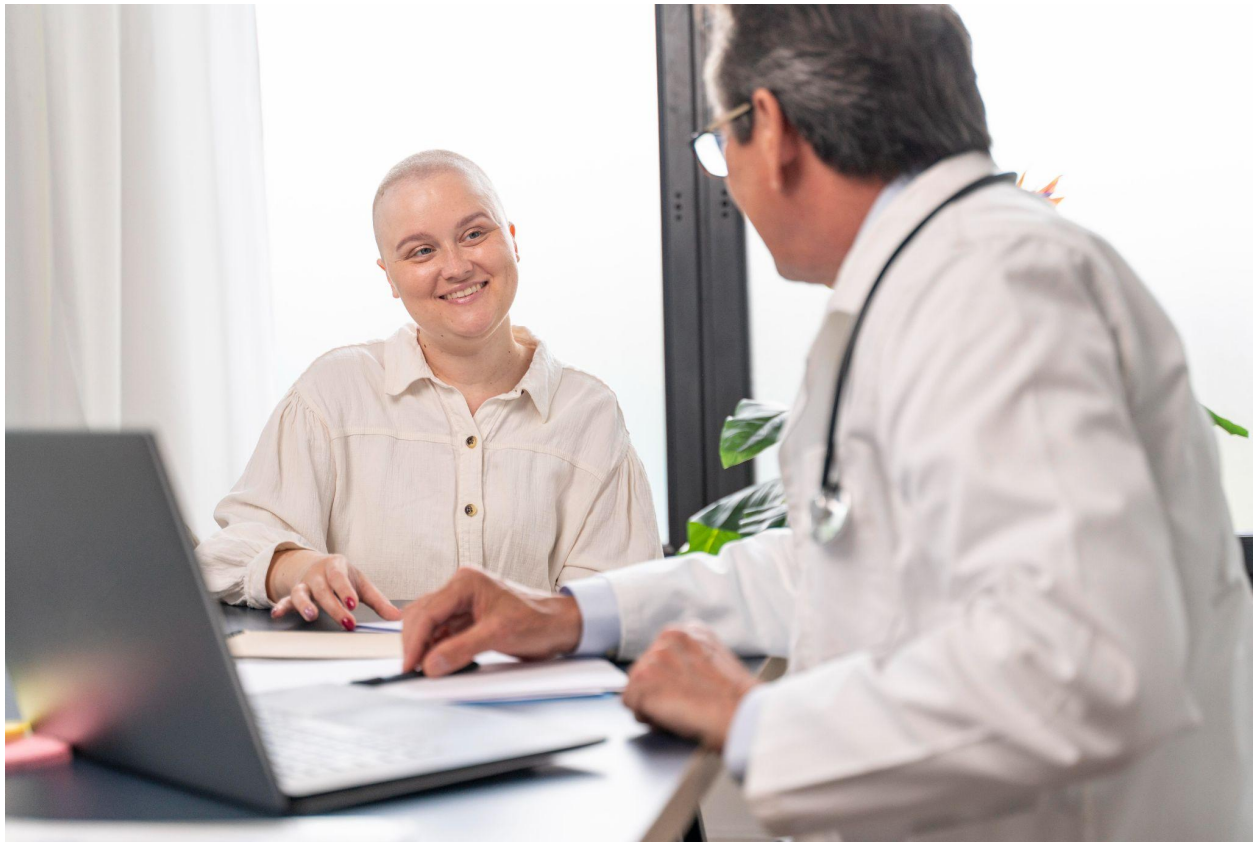


The common causes of breast cancer are either due to hormonal or lifestyle, age, history or environmental factors. Surprisingly, around 66% of breast cancer patients are people over 55 years of age.

There are many breast cancer factors that one can control, like maintaining their body weight, alcohol consumption, breast implants, choosing not to breastfeed, using hormone-based pills or medicines.

Nevertheless, there are many factors that you have no control over. Factors include age, gender, family history, genes, race, ethnicity, height, and exposure to either radiation and hormonal-based pills or medicines when treating diseases or other types of cancers.

Breast Cancer Symptoms



Some people have more than one or two symptoms, and some don't have any signs or symptoms or don't realise any signs or symptoms at all. The following are the most common breast cancer symptoms:

- Lump in either breast or armpit
- Swelling of any part of the breast
- Pain in any area of the breast
- Change in the shape of the breast
- Any flat or indented area on the breast
- Pulling in of the nipple
- Nipple discharge
- Redness in any area of the breast
- Irritation or dimpling in breast skin

Treatments of the Breast Cancer



The same treatment can't treat all types of cancer. There are, however, few treatments available for certain types of cancers. In those cases, you have the option to choose the safest treatment available.

Surgery: Surgery is an operation where doctors remove the tumour and nearby cancer cells and tissues to stop the spreading of cancer. Surgery by far has the least post-treatment effects when compared to other treatments.

Chemotherapy: Chemotherapy is a treatment where the medicine is given, which kills the cancer cells, as a result, stops the cancer cells from reproducing and stops spreading in the body. The medicine is mostly taken as an injection, but it can also be taken as a pill, capsule, liquid, cream, or shot.

Radiation Therapy: Radiation therapy is when cancer is treated with high doses of radiation to kill cancer cells and shrink the tumours caused by the cancer cells. Radiation therapy usually takes longer and has more side effects than the other treatments.

Biological Therapy: Biological therapy is also known as biotherapy or immunotherapy. When done, this treatment restores and stimulates the body's immune system, which helps the body fight cancer cells. Some people stay on this therapy for up to two to three years!

Hormonal Therapy: This therapy also comes with other names like hormone manipulation, hormone withdrawal therapy and endocrine therapy. Hormonal therapy stops the growth of cancer cells by adding, removing or blocking the hormones that cancer cells may use for their growth. It may seem that hormonal therapy doesn't have a good success rate, but in reality, it does.

Post-Treatment Issues



Here are some common post-treatment effects:

- Difficulty doing physical activities, as simple as walking sometimes
- Distress
- Depression
- Infertility
- Breast changes in appearance and feeling
- Sexuality and intimacy issues
- Early menopause
- Fatigue
- Insomnia
- Joint, muscle and bone pain
- Weight gain

Some unusual post-treatment effects include:

- Numbness
- Severe pain in any area of the breast
- Lymphedema
- Problems with memory, concentration, attention or decision making

To ensure you go through none of these issues, it is best to follow up with your doctor weekly or monthly, depending on your condition.

Breast Cancer Myths



There are many myths and misconceptions when it comes to breast cancer. “If you don’t have a family history of breast cancer, you won’t get it” is by far the most common myth. As a matter of fact, most people with breast cancer have no breast cancer cases in their family history.

Some other myths include:

- Men can't get breast cancer
- You are guaranteed to have breast cancer if it runs in your family
- Eating healthy, avoiding alcohol and maintain weight won't cause breast cancer
- Consumption of excessive sugar causes breast cancer
- Mammograms always guarantee that symptoms of breast cancer can be identified early
- Mammograms are not very useful
- Breast cancer occurs only in middle-aged or older women
- Treating breast cancer in early-stage guarantees cure
- When treatment is over, there are zero chances of breast cancer occurring again
- You don't have breast cancer if you don't have a lump in your breast
- Breast implant raise your cancer risk
- Wearing bras cause breast cancer
- Underarm antiperspirant cause breast cancer

Benefits of Early Detection



The chances of survival are increased by a huge margin if breast cancer is detected and treated early. Simply because in the early stages, the cancer cells are less in number hence cause fewer issues and can be killed quickly compared to more cancer cells.

How less? Well, as each division takes a month or two, the cancer cells have been there in your body for two to five years by the time you feel a lump in your breast! Imagine!

As early detection means the cancer is detected early, there are fewer cancer cells to be treated. This opens up various treatments for treating the cancer, meaning you can choose the best treatment, resulting in a higher chance of effective treatment; hence, you will have fewer problems and issues after the treatment.

Conclusion



It is important for everyone to have the basic knowledge of breast cancer, how to avoid it and treat it. Everyone should also be aware of this cancer and take monthly or annual check-ups so that they can detect it as early as possible because detecting this cancer early can be life-changing.