

WHAT IS BREAST CANCER?

Breast cancer is one of the leading cancers affecting women worldwide, South Africa being no exception.

Breast cancer is a serious disease that could lead to the loss of a breast or even death. However, if detected early, it can be successfully treated.

Most women who are diagnosed are over the age of 50. However, breast cancer is becoming far more common in younger women.

WHO IS AT RISK?

All women are at risk of getting breast cancer, but you are more at risk if you:

- Are over 40
- Have a mother or sister that has been diagnosed with breast cancer
- Started your period at a young age
- Have gone through Menopause at a late stage
- Had children after the age of 30 or not at all
- Drink more than two glasses of alcohol a day

HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK OF BREAST CANCER

You can reduce the risk of breast cancer by:

- Exercising
- Eating a low fat diet
- Controlling your weight
- Drinking alcohol in moderation
- Stopping smoking

EARLY WARNING SIGNS



A lump in the breast or armpit



Puckering of the skin around the breast and chest area



An increase in the size of one breast



Dimpling or change of the nipple



A swelling of the glands



A discharge from the nipple



A swelling in the armpit



A lowering of one breast or nipple

BREAST SELF-EXAMINATION

- Do a breast examination every single month.
- Get to know the size, shape and feeling of your breasts. That way you will detect any changes in your breasts that could be signs of Breast Cancer.
- A breast self-examination will take only minutes of your time once a month and it could save your life.
- The best time to examine your breast is one week after your period.
- If you no longer menstruate, choose the same day each month.

WHAT DO I DO IF I FIND A CHANGE IN MY BREAST?

See your doctor or clinic as soon as possible. A lump does not mean that you have breast cancer. Many lumps are non cancerous, but a doctor must check all lumps. If you are older than 40, it is advisable to have a mammogram every year. Early detection could save your life.

WHAT IS A MAMMOGRAM?

It is an X-ray that can assist in detecting breast cancer before the lump is even obvious. This only takes a few minutes and is relatively painless.

