

Breast cancer can affect all women whatever their age or origin.

In North America, Breast cancer is the most often diagnosed cancer with women and is the second cause of death from cancer. Causes of breast cancer are still unknown. Therefore the importance of being well informed and of knowing how to act quickly.

What is cancer?

Cancer is a serious disease. Perfectly normal cells present sudden changes (without any reason). They proliferate and regroup themselves in tumors or nodules.

At the beginning, these tumors are located in an organ (breast, lung, etc.). Then they spread everywhere in the body.

Breast cancer appears when abnormal cells are located in the breast.

What about breast cancer?

Causes of breast cancer are still unknown, but this cancer can be early detected and hence the healing chances are higher. At a beginning phase, breast cancer can be treated, but at an advanced stage, it may need the complete ablation of the breast, or even cause death.

How to recognize breast cancer?

Signs of the presence of a breast cancer are not always obvious. Sometimes however some signs can be observed, for example: alteration of the breast in volume or in changes of colours or flowing from the breast. Those symptoms are not always cancer-related but as soon as they appear a professional must be consulted.

There are factors that increase the risks with some persons:

- Older age(50 years and over)
- A mother ,sister or daughter with breast cancer
- A personal history of breast disease
- Older age(30)at first birth or never having given birth
- Early age at menarche(under 12)
- Older age at menopause

Even if you have none of these factors, be sure to know that **any woman may have to fight breast cancer.**

What you can do by yourself.

The breast exam.

A regular exam of the breast allows the woman an early detection of a tumor, and a fast action to eliminate the cancer and avoid its spreading in the body.

This exam can be made by

- a physician, who can establish exactly if signs of a cancer are there
- The woman herself

How to proceed for that exam:

Before a mirror, look carefully at your breasts for any changes of skin or size of your breasts. Then, seated or standing up, raise your right hand above your head. Using your left hand, touch your right breast with the flat pads of your fingers and press deeply. Begin in the left side of your breast towards the outside and make progressive moves in the directions shown under. Check the whole surface of the breast. Repeat the same moves for the left breast.

During the exam, if you feel a small weight or a knot in your breast or if you see any change in the aspect of your breast, see your physician to check up the nature of those signs.

An early detection of the breast cancer

The most effective way to detect a breast cancer is the mammogram.

Mammogram = an x-ray of the breast. Each breast is compressed between two plates in order to take an inside look. It lasts just a few seconds and is neither harmful nor dangerous.

If necessary other tests can be used to learn more:

- The local x-ray
- The echography
- The biopsy

All those tests are free but to pass them you need a medical prescription.

If you are between 50 and 69 years old you can benefit by the Québec program of breast cancer detection. You will be invited to pass a mammogram. Join the program to receive personalized services like a mammogram every two years, mailing and following of results, taking in charge of the treatments.

If you are under 50 years old, do a monthly breast self-exam, 2-3 days after menstruations. See your doctor once a year even if you have no symptoms.

This folder has been produced by le *Centre International des Femmes, Québec* from publications and information documents about the programs of breast cancer detection from various institutions.

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The *Centre International des Femmes, Québec* cannot offer expert appraisal on breast cancer. However, flyers and folders are available to the public

In our community there are many institutions ready to help you finding informations related to breast cancer.

For a medical examination or to learn how to do the breast self-exam :

- ✓ Your nearest medical clinic
- ✓ Your nearest CLSC

To get information on the Québec program of breast cancer detection :

- ✓ Regional services coordination Center
St-Sacrement hospital
tel. (418) 682-7596, 1-877-682-7596

For those fighting with breast cancer, informations about cancer and treatments and also help services at:

- ✓ *Québec Cancer Foundation*
tel. 1 800 363-0063, (418) 657-5334
- ✓ *Canadian Cancer Society*
tel. 1 888 939-3333, (418) 683-8666

If you feel abnormalities once in a while, the specialized personnel of clinics and centers of detection can help you to know more. You can at any time ask questions and seek informations concerning a diagnosis or a prescribed treatment.

Available treatments

There is a wide variety of treatments available to everybody.

- For a cancer at its beginning phase
- surgery to remove the tumor followed by treatments (chemiotherapy, radiotherapy). Healing is almost certain and recovery is fast.
- For a cancer at an advanced phase.
-more severe surgery which may lead to the total ablation of the breast affected with cancer and the treatments are longer and more complicated.

Remember :

Nowadays, cancer does not mean necessarily death because treatments are available. A tumor of small size can rapidly be removed. However, once there, cancer spreads rapidly all over the body, and that can lead to death.

Generally living a well balanced life with good habits can prevent the development of all types of cancer.

- Eating a lot of fruits and vegetables
- Playing sport
- Having a first pregnancy under 30 years old and suckle the babies

**Women
Of cultural communities,
Prevent breast cancer**

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