



Improving the health of Durham
& NC communities since 1989

Community Health Coalition, Inc.

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Healthy Sunday Topic: BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

October is here which brings with it breast cancer awareness month. One in eight women are affected by this disease and unfortunately, African-American women have a disproportionate share of advanced breast cancer that is more difficult to treat and often causes death. According to the North Carolina Central Cancer Registry, breast cancer is the third leading cancer in North Carolina and approximately 9,339 North Carolina residents will be diagnosed with breast cancer in 2013.



Dr. Sheila Allison, MD/Gynecologist at Southpoint Medicine and Women's Health Associates says, "Early detection is one of the best weapons for fighting the disease which includes self-breast exam and regular mammography." Additional studies may be recommended for women who have a first degree relative diagnosed with breast cancer at a very early age.

Self-breast exam means regular, consistent exam of both breasts. This is best done after the menstrual period when the breasts are easier to exam because of lower hormone levels. If not longer menstruating, I recommend my patients choose a familiar date, like their birthday (day 7th of every month for example) as a reminder.



Dr. Sheila Allison

Though there have been conflicting messages about frequency of mammograms, we continue to recommend them yearly. The wonderful thing about breast cancer awareness month is that there are many options for free mammograms for women without health insurance. I encourage you take advantage of this.

Risk factors for breast cancer include:

- First degree relative (sister, mother or daughter) with breast cancer
- First pregnancy after age 30 and has never breast fed
- Early onset of menstruation or late menopause
- Excessive alcohol intake
- High fat diet
- Obesity

In addition to exploring breast cancer detection, let's consider breast cancer prevention.

African-American women have a higher rate of obesity than other races. There are many things that happen in fat cells including hormone production. A type of estrogen is produced that increases the risk of breast cancer. Knowing this and the fact that a high fat diet is a risk factor, what can we do to lower our risk?

Women who walk 10 miles per week have a **lower** risk of breast cancer. That is probably because they have less body fat with lower harmful hormone levels. Adding that up, we decrease our breast cancer risk if we make regular exercise a part of our lifestyles as well as decrease fat in our diet. If we do that, the fat-burning and weight loss will automatically follow!

Let's be participants in maintaining our health and preventing disease.

- Do self-breast exams
- Get regular mammograms
- Revise your diet to eliminate unhealthy fatty foods
- Make regular exercise a part of your lifestyle

Remember: Annual mammogram screening for women over the age of 40 and those at high risk, Breast self-examination at least once a month for those over the age of 20, and Control your weight by maintaining a healthy lifestyle and exercising regularly.

For More Information:

- www.komen.org or 1-877-GO KOMEN
- The Living Beyond Breast Cancer 1.888.753.LBBC (5222)
- Nat'l Cancer Institute's Cancer Info Services 1.800.4.CANCER
- Breast & Cervical Cancer Control Program (BCCCP) 919.707.5300



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Health Tip is a message from your **Community Health Coalition, Inc.** and is written in partnership with Durham Academy of Medicine, Dentistry and Pharmacy, Central Carolina Black Nurses' Council Inc., The Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Durham and Vicinity, and Durham Regional Hospital.

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