

What every woman should know about breast cancer

AS we observe Breast Cancer Awareness Month, it is important that every woman arm herself with as much information as possible in order to better detect and protect herself against the dreaded disease. Remember that early detection can save your life.

Here are some things that all women should know about breast cancer:

. Breast cancer is believed to be caused by a combination of both known and unknown factors, including genetics (such as family history of breast cancer), lifestyle choices (such as diet and alcohol use) and reproductive factors (such as age of menarche and menopause). . Symptoms to pay attention to include a lump, hard knot or thickening in the breast; swelling, warmth, redness or darkening; change in breast size or shape; dimpling or puckering of the skin; itchy, scaly sore or rash on the nipple; the pulling in of your nipple or other parts of the breast; nipple discharge that starts suddenly, and new pain in one spot. . Being a woman and getting older are the two greatest risk factors for breast cancer. . All women are at risk, and this increases when you are over 50; have a family history of breast cancer; have your first child after age 30; have never had children; or if you are obese. . Clinical exams every three years between the ages of 20 to 39 will detect signs of the disease. . You must do your breast self-examination at the same time each month. . You must do your mammogram at least once a year if you are 40 and over. . You must have your clinical exam by a physician regularly. . Mammograms are the number one screening tool. They are able to detect lumps two years before they are felt. It can also detect other abnormalities which indicate the presence of cancer.