



## The American Cancer Society Breast Cancer Awareness Tool Kit

### **October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month**

Nearly everyone in your community has likely been touched by breast cancer in some way – whether personally or through the experience of a family member, friend, or co-worker. Among women, breast cancer continues to be the most frequently diagnosed cancer other than skin cancer. Breast cancer is also the second leading cause of cancer death in women (after lung cancer). Despite these statistics, only about half of women aged 40 and older report having a mammogram – a screening test the American Cancer Society recommends to find breast cancer early, when it is most treatable – within the past year. Additionally, studies have shown that physical inactivity and weight gain are associated with breast cancer risk, meaning people who are physically active and maintain a healthy weight are less likely to get breast cancer.

This is where you come in. October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. You can help save lives and create a world with less breast cancer and more birthdays by encouraging your community to stay well by taking steps to help reduce their risk of developing breast cancer or find it early. By collaborating with the American Cancer Society, you can also connect community members who are facing breast cancer with programs and services to help them focus on getting well. We encourage you to share these messages during the month of October, as well as throughout the year.

Together with the American Cancer Society, your community can fight breast cancer and save lives!

### **How to Use this Breast Cancer Awareness Tool Kit**

The kit includes a variety of communication tools that you can use based on your community's needs, such as the Society's recommended breast cancer screening guidelines, general facts about the disease, sample email blasts, newsletter articles, promotional messages to post around town and quizzes. All the materials are designed for any size community and can be tailored according to your community's needs.

### **Breast Cancer and the American Cancer Society**

As a leader in the fight against breast cancer, the American Cancer Society is committed to saving lives and creating a world with less cancer and more birthdays. Thanks to the American Cancer Society and its many supporters, countless Americans who have never had breast cancer and more than 2 million who are surviving the disease will celebrate another birthday this year. How are we bringing a world with less breast cancer and more birthdays to life? By helping people stay well and get well, by finding cures, and by fighting back against the disease.



## Suggestions for Promoting National Breast Cancer Awareness Month within your Community

(All content for email blasts, newsletter, quick tips, and recipes mentioned throughout this list is located in the pages to follow.)

### Brochures

Brochures are available from your American Cancer Society. Contact your local staff partner to place an order for breast cancer brochures and other materials.

### Email Blasts/Newsletter Articles

Promote Breast Cancer Awareness Month by sending email blasts to friends, family, committee members, team captains, etc and encouraging them to do the same. Post these short articles in newsletters or distribute as flyers at locations throughout your community.

Email Blast/Article #1: Don't Forget Your Yearly Mammogram?

Email Blast/Article #2: Stay Well and Reduce Your Risk of Breast Cancer

Email Blast/Article #3: Are You at Risk for Breast Cancer?

Email Blast/Article #4: Healthy Reminders for Busy Women

Email Blast/Article #5: Myths and Truths About Breast Cancer

### Email Signature

Consider changing your email signature to promote Breast Cancer Awareness Month – “We are making strides in the fight against breast cancer. To learn more about breast cancer and how to get involved, visit [www.cancer.org/breastcancer](http://www.cancer.org/breastcancer) or call 1.800.227.2345. Together we can create a world with more birthdays and less breast cancer.”

### Employer Breast Cancer Toolkit

There is a toolkit designed specifically to help employers promote breast cancer awareness in their workplace. Share this information with local businesses, corporate sponsors and teams and others in your community to help raise awareness about breast cancer prevention and early detection.

### Mammogram Reminder System

The American Cancer Society has an electronic Mammogram Reminder System. This easy-to-use email system is designed to ensure that women 40 and older remember to get their yearly mammogram – [www.cancer.org/breastcancer](http://www.cancer.org/breastcancer). Sign up yourself and send an email with this information to encourage other women to sign up. There is also a feature that allows users to send reminders to important women in their lives.

### Mammograms Matter Video

The American Cancer Society created a video that explains the importance of regular mammograms. This online video can be found at [www.cancer.org/mammovideo](http://www.cancer.org/mammovideo). Show this video at committee meetings, event kickoffs, team captain meetings, etc.



### Personal Stories

Many people who have been touched by breast cancer have a story to share. Consider featuring these individuals in your event newsletter, via an email blast or on your event website or asking them to share their story at a committee meeting. You may also consider featuring individuals who have successfully made lifestyle changes that will lower their risk for breast cancer (i.e. lost weight, started exercising regularly, etc.).

### Posters

Posters are available from your American Cancer Society. Contact your local staff partner to receive breast cancer posters. Hang them around your community and ask local business to do the same (i.e. health clubs, salons, grocery stores, hospital, clinics, etc.) to increase awareness of the importance of regular breast cancer screening.

### Quick Facts/Promotional Messages

Share these facts to raise awareness of breast cancer at a committee meeting. These can also be used as email blasts, in newsletters or on your online event site.

### Quiz

Distribute this breast cancer quiz to other volunteers or community members to test their knowledge. Have a drawing for people that take the quiz. Don't forget to share the correct answers!

### Recipes

You can reduce your risk of breast cancer by eating right and maintaining a healthy body weight. Consider planning a healthy potluck for your next committee meeting or community gathering. Ask others to bring and share their favorite healthy recipes. Work with local restaurants to encourage them to highlight healthy food options or ask a local dietician to host a healthy cooking class or seminar.

### Support

The American Cancer Society Cancer Resource Network can help those who have been touched by cancer. We are here to help with information, day-to-day help and emotional support 24 hours a day, seven days a week at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) or 1.800.227.2345. Contact your local staff partner for materials to help promote the help available through the American Cancer Society.

### Workplace Solutions

The American Cancer Society Workplace Solutions can help local companies improve the health and wellness of their employees. Visit [www.acsworkplacesolutions.com](http://www.acsworkplacesolutions.com) for more information.



## How the American Cancer Society is Fighting Breast Cancer

### **Staying Well: Healthy Lifestyle Choices and Early Detection**

The key to celebrating more birthdays is to stay well. Getting a yearly mammogram is the most important action that women can take to find breast cancer early – before physical symptoms develop – when the disease is most treatable. By following the American Cancer Society's breast cancer screening guidelines, women can help save lives and create a world with more birthdays.

The American Cancer Society's current breast cancer screening guidelines are as follows:

- Yearly mammograms should begin at age 40 and continue for as long as a woman is in good health.
- A clinical breast exam should be part of a periodic health exam – about every three years for women in their 20s and 30s and every year for women age 40 and older.
- Women should know how their breasts normally look and feel and report any breast change to a health care professional right away. Breast self-exam is an option for women starting in their 20s.

The American Cancer Society also recommends that some women at high risk of breast cancer – because of family history, a genetic tendency, or certain other factors – be screened with MRI in addition to mammograms starting at age 30 (less than 2 percent of women in the United States fall into this category). Women should talk with their doctor about their history and whether they should have an MRI.

In addition to finding breast cancer early with mammograms, women can stay well by helping reduce their breast cancer risk by making healthy lifestyle choices such as staying at a healthy weight, getting regular exercise, and limiting their alcohol intake.

### **Getting Well: Help through Every Step of the Cancer Experience**

Whether it's the middle of the day or the middle of the night, the American Cancer Society is here around the clock to guide survivors or their family members who are facing breast cancer through every step of their breast cancer experience. Below are just a few of the free programs and services that we offer to your community. Community members should call us at 1-800-227-2345 to check availability in their area. Cancer Information Specialists are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to provide information, resources, and support.

- One-on-one support from breast cancer survivors who have been there
- Help with beauty techniques to boost self-esteem during treatment
- Free wigs



- Transportation assistance to and from treatment
- Lodging when having to travel far from home for treatment
- Assistance to help make informed decisions about care, finances, and insurance
- Online support community
- Online education classes

### **Working to Find Breast Cancer's Causes and Cures**

The American Cancer Society is working every day to fight cancer for all people through research. The Society has played a role in many major breast cancer research breakthroughs in recent history, including mammography to screen for breast cancer, the development of Tamoxifen and Herceptin, and the knowledge that genetics, diet, lack of exercise, and even moderate drinking can increase a person's breast cancer risk. Additionally, the Society has invested more than \$388 million in breast cancer research grants since 1971. We could easily classify many of our basic cancer research projects (approximately 70 percent) as having a potential benefit for breast cancer.

### **Fighting Back Against Breast Cancer**

Because every woman deserves access to breast cancer screenings and treatment, the American Cancer Society continues to work with its advocacy affiliate, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network<sup>SM</sup> (ACS CAN), to help increase funding for programs like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (NBCCEDP). This program provides low-income, uninsured, and underinsured women access to mammograms, follow-up care, and treatment, regardless of their ability to pay. You can join the fight to ensure all women have access to mammograms and the care they need by visiting [acscan.org/makingstrides](https://acscan.org/makingstrides).

Additionally, the American Cancer Society rallies communities to join the fight against breast cancer through our nationwide American Cancer Society Making Strides Against Breast Cancer<sup>®</sup> events. Since 1993, we have united more than five million walkers and raised more than \$340 million to help save lives from breast cancer. Today, more than 50,000 Making Strides participants have signed postcard petitions asking their legislators to increase funding for the NBCCEDP. Find out if there is a Making Strides event in your community at [cancer.org/makingstrides](https://cancer.org/makingstrides).



## Sample Content for Email Blasts, Newsletter Articles, Promotional Messages and Quizzes

### **TITLE: Don't Forget Your Yearly Mammogram**

Did you know that the best defense against breast cancer is finding it early – when it is most treatable? Yearly mammograms can help save lives because they often show breast changes that may be cancer even before physical symptoms develop. By following the American Cancer Society's breast cancer screening guidelines, you or important women in your life can find breast cancer early.

The American Cancer Society's current breast cancer screening guidelines are:

- Yearly mammograms should begin at age 40 and continue for as long as a woman is in good health.
- A clinical breast exam should be part of a periodic health exam – about every three years for women in their 20s and 30s and every year for women age 40 and older.
- Women should know how their breasts normally look and feel and report any breast changes to a health care provider right away. Breast self-examination (BSE) is an option for women starting in their 20s.

**For a free email reminder to schedule your yearly mammogram, go to [cancer.org/MammogramReminder](https://cancer.org/MammogramReminder) or call 1-800-227-2345.**





## **TITLE: Stay Well and Reduce Your Risk of Breast Cancer**

Did you know that there are steps you can take that can actually help you reduce your risk of getting breast cancer? Staying at a healthy weight, being physically active on a regular basis, and limiting your alcohol intake are ways you can fight breast cancer to stay well.

**Watch your weight.** Being overweight or obese is associated with increased risk of developing breast cancer. So, choose foods that will help you maintain a healthy weight and eat five or more servings of a variety of vegetables and fruits each day. Try to choose whole grains instead of processed (refined) grains and sugars, and limit the amount of red meat you eat, especially meats that are high in fat and are processed. Balance the number of calories you consume with your physical activity.

**Exercise.** Adults should engage in moderate or vigorous activity for at least 30 minutes a day on five or more days per week. Forty-five minutes or more of exercise on five or more days per week may be even better for reducing the risk of breast cancer.

**Limit the amount of alcohol you drink.** Women who drink alcohol should limit their intake to no more than one drink per day (no more than two for men). The recommended limit is lower for women because of their smaller body size and slower metabolism of alcohol. A drink is defined as 12 ounces of beer, five ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits.

In addition to making healthy lifestyle choices, be sure to get regular mammograms starting at age 40. These tests can help you find breast cancer early, when it is easier to treat.

**For more information on how you can help reduce your risk of breast cancer to stay well, call your American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345 or visit [cancer.org/breastcancer](https://cancer.org/breastcancer).**



## **TITLE: Are you at risk for breast cancer?**

Although we do not know how to prevent breast cancer, it is possible to reduce your risk of developing the disease to help you stay well. Some risk factors such as age, race, family history of the disease, and reproductive history cannot be changed. However, lifestyle factors such as reducing alcohol use, engaging in regular physical activity, eating well, and staying at a healthy weight are all associated with lower risk.

Being a woman is the greatest risk factor for breast cancer; but men can develop breast cancer, too.

The risk of developing breast cancer increases with age. Two out of three women with invasive breast cancer are 55 or older when they are diagnosed.

Breast cancer risk is higher among women with a family history of the disease. Having a first-degree relative (mother, sister, or daughter) with breast cancer increases a woman's risk. However, most women with breast cancer do not have a first-degree relative with the disease.

Additional risk factors include:

- Postmenopausal hormone therapy (especially combined estrogen and progestin therapy)
- Being overweight or obese, especially if weight is gained after menopause
- Use of alcohol, especially two or more drinks daily
- Physical inactivity
- Long menstrual history
- Never having children or having your first child after age 30
- Previous chest radiation to treat a different cancer

**To learn more about breast cancer and how to reduce your risk, call your American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345 or visit [cancer.org/breastcancer](https://cancer.org/breastcancer).**





## **TITLE: Healthy Reminders for Busy Women**

For many women juggling work, home-life, and family there is little time left for them to take care of themselves. However, taking the time to know what cancer screening tests are right for you could save your life. The American Cancer Society encourages you to talk with your doctor about breast cancer, cervical cancer, and colon cancer screenings as part of our cancer prevention/early detection initiative in the workplace.

**Breast:** The American Cancer Society recommends yearly mammograms for women age 40 and older. A breast exam by a doctor or nurse should be part of a periodic health exam about every three years for women in their 20s and 30s, and every year for women beginning at age 40. Women who think they may be at a higher risk for breast cancer than most other women should talk with their doctor about their risk and whether they need an MRI along with their mammogram and if they should start being screened at an earlier age.

**Cervix:** Testing for cervical cancer should begin three years after a woman begins having sex, but no later than age 21. Women should have a Pap test every year or a liquid-based Pap every two years.

**Colon:** This cancer occurs in both men and women equally. Testing can actually prevent some colon cancers by finding and removing precancerous polyps to stop cancer before it starts. Women age 50 or older should ask their doctor about tests that are right for them.



## **TITLE: Do You Know the Truth about Breast Cancer?**

### ***Myths and Truths about Breast Cancer and Mammograms***

**MYTH: No one in my family has ever had breast cancer, so I don't really need to be concerned.**

**TRUTH:** Your risk is greater if a close relative has had breast cancer. But as many as 80 percent of breast cancers are diagnosed in women who do not have a family history of the disease.

**MYTH: If I'm going to get breast cancer, there's nothing I can do about it.**

**TRUTH:** Yes, there are things you can do. While we still don't know how to prevent breast cancer, we do know that early detection can improve a woman's chances of beating this disease. A mammogram can find a tumor much earlier than you or your doctor can feel it. When breast cancer is found early, while it is small and before it has spread, the chance of successful treatment is highest. Early detection also means that a woman's chances for saving her breast are better because doctors may be able to remove the tumor and only a small area of nearby tissue. You can also take steps to reduce your risk of the disease, including maintaining a healthy weight, eating well, getting plenty of exercise, and limiting alcohol intake.

**MYTH: These tests cost a lot, and I can't afford a mammogram.**

**TRUTH:** Medicare, Medicaid, and almost all insurance companies cover mammograms. Some low-cost mammogram programs are also available. These are often promoted during National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, every October. Some doctors, hospitals, or clinics may also lower their fees for women who cannot afford the usual charge. Also, the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program provides free or low-cost screening and follow-up treatment for low-income, uninsured, and underinsured women, with a high priority on reaching racial and ethnic minority women. Contact the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345 to learn more about special low-cost programs in your community.

**MYTH: Since mammograms are x-rays, the radiation could be dangerous.**

**TRUTH:** In the past 20 years, both the equipment and how mammograms are done have greatly improved. Today, the level of radiation is very low and does not significantly raise a woman's risk of breast cancer.



**MYTH: I heard mammograms hurt and can be embarrassing.**

**TRUTH:** When you get a mammogram, you stand beside the machine and a specially trained technologist helps place your breast on a metal plate. A second plate made of plastic is placed on top, and for a few seconds, the top plate is pushed down and flattens the breast to get a good, clear picture. The technologist usually takes two pictures of each breast. Many women may feel some discomfort, but it is for a very short time. To reduce discomfort, try to avoid scheduling your mammogram during the week before or during your period, when your breasts are most tender. Tell the technologist if you have any pain.

**MYTH: If I get a mammogram, I'm going to find breast cancer.**

**TRUTH:** Only two to four mammograms out of every 1,000 will lead to a cancer diagnosis. Only about 10 percent of women need more tests. If a suspicious area is found, your doctor will order more tests. Another mammogram may be done, focusing more pictures on the area of concern. The doctor may also use a thin needle to remove fluid or a small amount of tissue from the suspicious area. This test is called a biopsy and it is the only way to know for sure whether or not the changes are caused by cancer. A specialist called a pathologist looks at the sample under a microscope. But even if you are told you need a biopsy, remember that more than 80 percent of lumps or suspicious areas will not be cancer.

**MYTH: I've lived this long without getting breast cancer. Why should I bother with a mammogram?**

**TRUTH:** Your risk of developing breast cancer increases as you get older. More than two out of every three breast cancers diagnosed each year occur in women older than 55. Even if you've been through menopause, you still need a mammogram.

**For more information on how you can fight breast cancer and save lives, please call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345 or visit [cancer.org](https://www.cancer.org).**



## Promotional Messages

*These shorter promotional messages can be used for email blasts and newsletter inserts.*

To keep fighting breast cancer and saving lives, all women age 40 and older should get a mammogram every year and take steps to reduce their risk. Sign up for a free email reminder at [cancer.org/MammogramReminder](https://cancer.org/MammogramReminder). Together with the American Cancer Society, you can save lives and create a world with more birthdays.

You can take steps to stay well and reduce your risk of breast cancer or find it early. Find out how and join the American Cancer Society's movement to create a world with less breast cancer and more birthdays at [cancer.org/breastcancer](https://cancer.org/breastcancer).

Staying at a healthy weight throughout life, being physically active, eating well, and limiting the amount of alcohol you drink are smart strategies for reducing your risk of breast cancer to stay well. To learn more and to join the fight against breast cancer, call your American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345 or visit [cancer.org/breastcancer](https://cancer.org/breastcancer).

If you are facing breast cancer, the American Cancer Society is here to help you through every step of the experience so you can focus on getting well. Please call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345 or visit [cancer.org/breastcancer](https://cancer.org/breastcancer) to find free services to overcome daily challenges, get one-on-one support from breast cancer survivors who have been there, or receive help with beauty techniques after treatment to boost your self-esteem. We know that every cancer patient is a fighter – and we're in the ring with you through every round to help you fight for more birthdays.

Breast changes can show up on mammograms before you or your doctor feel a lump. Survival rates are high for women diagnosed with early-stage breast cancer, when the cancer is small and has not spread. In fact, finding breast cancer early increases the 5-year survival rate to 98 percent. To help fight breast cancer and save lives, call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345 or visit [cancer.org/breastcancer](https://cancer.org/breastcancer).

Death rates from breast cancer have steadily decreased in women since 1990, but African American women are more likely to die from the disease than other women. Factors that contribute to the higher death rates among African American women include differences in access to and use of early detection and treatment and differences in tumor types. Take action to fight breast cancer and save lives by calling the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345 or visiting [cancer.org/breastcancer](https://cancer.org/breastcancer) for more information. Is it time for your *yearly* mammogram? If you're a woman age 40 or older, remember to get a mammogram *every year*. Call the American Cancer Society for a free information packet at 1-800-227-2345, or visit [cancer.org/breastcancer](https://cancer.org/breastcancer) for more details.

Sometimes we get busy and forget to make an appointment for a mammogram. To keep you up to date, the American Cancer Society mammogram reminder will send you a personalized email reminder to schedule your next mammogram. It's free. Go to [cancer.org/MammogramReminder](https://cancer.org/MammogramReminder) to set up your personalized mammogram reminder and encourage other women in your life to do the same.

To volunteer to help breast cancer patients in your community or to find out how you can join the movement for less breast cancer and more birthdays, call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345 or visit [cancer.org/breastcancer](https://cancer.org/breastcancer).



**Interactive Quiz**  
***Do You Know the Facts on Breast Health?***

1. **Not all women are at risk for breast cancer.** True/ False
  
2. **A mammogram can find cancers when they are very small, often several years before a lump or change can be felt.** True/ False
  
3. **There's nothing I can do to reduce my risk of breast cancer.** True/False
  
4. **Having breast cancer always means losing a breast.** True/False
  
5. **I don't need to get a mammogram once I've been through menopause.** True/False



## Quiz Answers

### 1. Not all women are at risk for breast cancer.

False. All women are at risk for breast cancer. And the risk goes up with age. Some women, such as those who have a close family member with the disease such as a mother, sister, or daughter, have a higher-than-average risk of developing breast cancer themselves. However, most women who develop breast cancer have no family history of the disease.

### 2. A mammogram can find cancers when they are very small, often several years before a lump or change can be felt.

True. Mammograms can find cancers when they are too small to be felt. Finding breast cancer early improves the chance of successful treatment. But, mammograms are not perfect; in fact, they may even miss some cancers. Any breast lump or change in your breast should be checked by a doctor, even if your mammogram is normal.

### 3. There's nothing I can do to reduce my risk of breast cancer.

False. Although we don't yet know how to prevent breast cancer, there are steps you can take every day to reduce your risk of developing this disease:

- Stay at a healthy weight; being overweight or obese can increase your risk.
- Get plenty of exercise. The American Cancer Society recommends at least 30 minutes a day, five or more days per week, but 45 to 60 minutes is even better.
- Limit alcohol to no more than one drink per day for women (two for men). One drink is 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits.

### 4. Having breast cancer always means losing a breast.

False. Many early breast cancers can be treated just as effectively with lumpectomy, an operation that removes only the tumor and a portion of the tissue around it. But not every woman is a good candidate for this treatment. If you have breast cancer, talk to your doctor about all your treatment options so you can make the decision that's right for you.

### 5. I don't need to get a mammogram once I've been through menopause.

False. The risk of breast cancer increases as you get older. Most cases of breast cancer are found in women over age 55. That's why it's important for all women 40 and older to get a mammogram and a breast exam by a doctor every year. The earlier you find breast cancer, the better your chances of successful treatment.