

# STRENGTH in NUMBERS

Breast cancer facts, figures and friends



- redness or inversion.
- Dimpling of the skin of the breast.
- A rash (like eczema affecting the nipple or surrounding area).
- Discharge from the nipple. If you notice anything unusual about your breast, the rule of thumb is to always consult with your doctor. It may be nothing to worry about and in that case the peace of mind is invaluable as is early detection and treatment if breast cancer is suspected.

### Breast Cancer In Numbers

- **20 percent**  
According to the latest data

available, breast cancer incidence worldwide has increased by more than 20 percent since 2008 estimates.

- **1.7 M**  
Women around the world were diagnosed with breast cancer in 2012. That represents nearly 12 percent of all cancer diagnoses worldwide, and 25 percent of all cancers in women.

- **6.3 M**  
In 2012, there were 6.3 million women alive who had been diagnosed with breast cancer in the previous five years. To put it in perspective, that's more people than the populations of Dubai, Milan and Chicago... Combined!

- **Twice the risk**  
Having one first-degree relative (mother, sister or daughter) with breast cancer doubles a woman's risk. Having two first-degree relatives increases her risk about three-fold.

- **98 percent**  
If detected and treated early, 98 percent of patients with breast cancer can be completely cured.

- **1 in 5**  
About 1 out of 5 men with breast cancer have a close male or female relative with the disease.

- **1 in 1000**  
Breast cancer is about 100 times less common among men than among women. For men, the lifetime risk of getting breast cancer is about 1 in 1,000. >>

**October marks Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a pivotal in the year when the world takes an all-inclusive approach to** increasing attention and awareness of breast cancer, as well as how it can be detected early and treated.

With over 1.3 million new cases and 458,000 deaths from breast cancer each year, it's a disease that we

all need to stand up to and recognize to do our part to reduce those shocking and devastating statistics.

Breast cancer is by far the most common cancer in women worldwide. It is the leading cancer in the UAE, accounting for a quarter of all cancers. Sadly, one in eight women here, will be diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime.

If the incidences continue at this rate, there will be

600 cases diagnosed in 2020 and as many as 1,000 cases by 2030.

Despite the high rate breast cancer worldwide there is still little known as to the causes, which means that early detection of the disease remains the cornerstone of breast cancer control. When breast cancer is detected early, and if adequate diagnosis and treatment are available, there is a good chance for recovery.

### What to Look For

- In most women, breast cancer is first noticed as a painless lump in the breast. However, it is important to say that most are benign and breast lumps aren't the only possible signs of breast cancer. Other signs to look for include:
- A change in the size, shape or feel of the breast.
- A change to the nipple such as ulceration, crusting,



## Lifestyle Strategies to Prevent Breast Cancer

Prevention is better than cure and while the cause of breast cancer is still relatively unknown, WH&F spoke with Dubai-based health and wellness expert, Bernadette Abraham to get her insights and recommendations on how we can do our part to lower our risk of developing breast cancer.

### 1. Breastfeed during childbearing years

Research shows that breastfeeding for six months or more reduces breast cancer risk. Additionally, according to a recent study in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute, women diagnosed with breast cancer who had previously breastfed were found to have

a lower risk of the cancer recurring and a lower risk of dying from breast cancer compared to women who never breastfed.

### 2. Excess body fat

Being overweight can lead to increased estrogen exposure because the body makes some of its estrogen in fat. Therefore, the more body fat you have, the greater your risk of developing breast cancer – especially after menopause when the ovaries no longer produce estrogen.

Don't just use the scale as a measurement – also check your waist circumference as a baseline measurement for abdominal fat. Men's waists should not be more than 37 inches (94 cm) and women's waists not more than 31.5 inches (80 cm).

Eating more of a natural, organic plant-based diet, and

making exercise and physical activity a part of your daily routine can help you achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

### 3. Sleep well

"It's not just about the number of hours that you get in, but also about sleeping between the right times – ideally 10pm to 6am. Even though we have the technology and ability to stay up late, our bodies are still very much in tune with the sun and our environment.

If you stay awake when you should be sleeping or vice versa, it disrupts the hormonal fluctuations that occur during the day and night, and won't allow you to get in the optimal levels required for good health.

### 4. Optimize your Vitamin D Level

While the exact daily dose of

vitamin D required for breast cancer prevention remains unclear, research does show that it plays a crucial role in disease prevention. Safe sun exposure is one of the best ways to increase your vitamin D serum levels naturally (as well as melatonin to help you sleep better). But if that is not feasible because of work, Vitamin D3 supplements can also be used. Just be sure to check with your doctor first because vitamin D supplementation increases your need for vitamin K2, and requires magnesium and zinc to work properly.

### 5. Reduce refined sugar and processed foods

While the direct link between sugar and breast cancer remains a debate in the science community, much of the research does show that higher insulin levels can influence

cancer cell growth and other chronic diseases.

Fructose in particular was shown to be the most harmful as it increases proliferation according to a study in the Cancer Research journal.

Reducing all types of sugars, avoiding man-made kinds such as high fructose corn syrup and keeping your natural fructose from fruits below 25 g per day, especially if you have insulin resistance, is ideal for better health.

### 6. Go green

Certain vegetables are emerging as powerful cancer fighters: parsley, celery, broccoli, broccoli sprouts, kale, collards, and other cruciferous vegetables.

When it comes to eating vegetables, keep it varied and the more the merrier – especially organic varieties.

The best way to get in more greens is to incorporate one or two green juices per day as part of your daily routine, either at breakfast or as a snack during the day. Remember that different colors are rich in different nutrients, so keep it varied.

### 7. Curcumin

Curcumin is the active ingredient found in turmeric spice. Current clinical trials are showing promising results for preventing and even treating certain types of cancers like breast cancer, bowel cancer, stomach cancer and skin cancer.

As prevention, add organic quality ground turmeric powder or the root liberally in your diet. You can add it to your cooking, to season salads and vegetables, in your green juice or as a tea.

Simply add ¼ teaspoon of ground turmeric or fresh grated turmeric to boiling water. Allow it to simmer for 10 minutes and strain before drinking. You can add honey and lemon for added flavor.

## Cancer Support Groups in the UAE

### ■ Brest Friends

Brest Friends is a cancer support group that provides psychological counseling and support to all breast cancer patients, survivors and their families, and educational programs to the community about breast cancer. The group meet in Dubai on the 3rd Sunday of the month. *Email: breastfriends@gmail.com*

### ■ Friends of cancer patients

Friends of Cancer Patients (FOCP), is a charitable, volunteer-based foundation that provides financial and emotional support to patients across the UAE. FOCP is committed to all residents of the UAE without discrimination. The charity's mission statement is to provide practical, financial, moral, educational and medical support for cancer patients and their loved ones. *focp.ae*

### ■ Breast Cancer Arabia

Breast Cancer Arabia provides financial support to women living and working in the United Arab Emirates, who have been diagnosed with breast cancer, access life-saving surgery and treatment when they are unable to afford these costs. It was set up to help improve breast cancer treatment and care for all women living and working in the Middle East. *breastcancerarabia.com*

### ■ Pure heart program

The Pure Heart Program also provides invaluable support to help all cancer patients get back to their normal working lives by re-entering the workforce and becoming an active member of society. The Pure Heart Program is dedicated to raising awareness of the importance of supporting cancer patients in every way. *purehearttoday.com*

### ■ Angels of Mercy

Angels of Mercy, provides psychological counseling and support to all cancer patients, survivors and their families, and educational programs to the community about cancer. The group meets once a month at Al Ain- Tawam Hospital. *angelsofmercyuae.wordpress.com* 🌱

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