2020

Manual for Health Promoters

Early Detection of Breast Cancer

PATH
Presentation

Breast cancer is a common illness in women; aside from putting their life in risk, it affects their image and may have consequences in their family life.

Women almost always see themselves facing, for the first time in their lives, a complex and unknown situation which will affect them significantly. They will quickly learn about each recommended method for detection and diagnosis.

Many women put the care of their loved ones before their own health and postpone the screening and adequate treatment of breast cancer. This postponement can lead to advanced stages of breast cancer and even death. The role of health promoters is important as they are the transmitters of key messages for women regarding their health care.

The purpose of this manual is to provide basic information for women to understand the importance of early detection of breast cancer:

1) Recognize risk factors for breast cancer
2) Learn the importance of the clinical breast exam
3) Recognize signs and symptoms related to breast cancer, and
4) Know where to go to receive an early detection service.

“The responsibility that every woman assumes over her own body and health will determine the possibility of detecting breast cancer in an adequate manner.”
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General Outline

Moments in a learning session

1. **Welcome**: The kindness and trust you inspire in others is very important at this moment.

2. **Presentation**: We must consider what group we are speaking to; this will help us with our approach of the subject. Always start with introductions. It is essential to have introductions in which each person may say their name, and interests. It is important to create an atmosphere of trust, break the ice, and get the group ready to learn.

3. **Awareness**: Before beginning the session, it is important to create awareness in the participants and attract their attention towards the topics that will be discussed. The goal is to convince them of the importance of the main topic of the session. You may use different strategies such as photographs or drawings.

4. **Educational Content**: You should always consider any previous knowledge that participants may have regarding the topic. Collect all the ideas and experiences that may be favorable, using motivating questions to have everyone's participation.

5. **Assessment of content and message**: Here you would verify if the knowledge shared was clear and understood.

6. **Commitment and session closure**: All learning must generate behavior change in people. This is the moment in which participants assume commitments regarding the topic developed to practice and disseminate what has been learned.
Suggestions for you, as a facilitator

- Seek to create an atmosphere of trust.
- Smile, this is the opening door to a close and trusted communication.
- Try your best to not seem “the owner of the truth”. Your mission should be to “share” knowledge and learning. This will allow more ease and trust in the participants when asking or giving their opinion.
- A fundamental skill is to have an adequate communication; this has to do with the way of expressing yourself and your capacity of listening. It is important to confirm that the participants have understood what you have wanted to communicate to them.
- If possible, use fun dynamics that involve movement. Learning should always be a fun and motivating activity.
- Use your body to express yourself. Verbal language is only a part of communication. Body language is very important throughout the process of facilitation, this helps increase the capacity of expression.

Thank you for your work and effort in approaching women. Thank you for your commitment and the time you stop spending with your family to contribute to the wellbeing of hundreds of women in the community.
Qualities of a Health Promoter

**BE UNDERSTANDING AND DISCRETE**
with the customs and livelihoods of people, knowing how to listen and being discrete with the information you are trusted with,

**BE A MOTIVATING AGENT**
And mobilizer of your community, which promotes and reinforces changes in the population to improve their quality of life.

**BE RESPONSIBLE**
Act in a serious and adequate manner to detect and guide in the alternatives for resolution of problems and how to act in these cases.

**ALWAYS BE UP TO DATE**
with new knowledge and techniques that improve your work and provide better information to the community.
Women recognize the importance of going to a health center and having a breast clinical exam performed by a trained health professional (physician, midwife and/or nurse).

Women are aware that after turning 40, they should have a clinical breast exam done every year.

Women learn the parts of the breast and can recognize signs and symptoms of breast cancer.

Women know the risk factors for breast cancer.

If there is any warning sign, the person must go to a health center immediately.

Share with women that the clinical breast exam is the first step, and the recommendation is to have a mammogram done if available.

Women are taught that living in a healthy manner may protect them from having breast cancer.

Early detection may avoid in women and their family, the pain and suffering that experienced in having advanced cancer.

Promote healthy lifestyle habits.

Welcome

“Good morning / Good afternoon...Thank you for being here. We are meeting to get to know a very important topic: breast cancer and especially what we can do to be alert for this illness”
Introduction Dynamics (*)

1. STARTING INSTRUCTIONS

Participants will dance around the room with background music. When the music stops, every person will hug someone. The music continues and participants start dancing again. The next time the music stops, three people will hug each other. Hugs become larger until the music stops for a last time, every participant must receive a hug.

Finally, as a group, every person expresses how they have felt.

This game tries to break any possible tension there may be at the beginning of a meeting and promote a group feeling from a positive approach for all participants.

2. THE CURIOUS BALL

Another dynamic that can be used consists of having the facilitator give the ball and invite the participants to sit and form a circle. The ball passes from one person to another with music in the background. The facilitator gives the sign to stop the exercise.

The person with the ball must introduce herself to the group: say her name, a quality she has and what motivated her to come to the session. The exercise continues in the same way until everyone is introduced. At the end, the facilitator emphasizes on some specific things mentioned by the participants and starts discussing the topic of the session.

(*) Use these dynamic activities, when there is no pandemic.
Module 1: Understanding Our Breasts

What do we need?

• Illustrated images:
  - Image 1: Understanding our breasts
  - Image 2: Parts of the breast
  - Image 3: Recognizing changes in breasts
  - Image 4: Early detection of breast cancer

• Flip charts (large sheets of white paper)
• Markers
• Masking tape

What do we want to achieve?

• Women know why it is important to be alert for breast cancer.
• Women recognize (*) the changes in their breasts.
• Women know the normal changes in breasts.
• Women recognize the specific signs of illness in breasts.

(*) Recognizing changes in the breasts is an evaluation that should not be considered a screening method; however, it is a method that promotes responsibility for taking care of one’s health.
Starting the session
After carrying out the introduction dynamics and creating an atmosphere of trust, we start the meeting by explaining what we want to achieve in the part of the learning sessions by saying:

“We are meeting to know why we should be alert for breast cancer, know a little more about the parts of the breast, normal changes and changes that happen when there is breast cancer”\(^1\)

Session I. Understanding parts of the breast
We show the image Nº 1: Understanding our breasts and we ask them:

- What do you see in this image?
- Do you know the parts of the breast?
- Do you know what they are used for?

After listening to their answers, we say: now we are going to see the parts of the breast and we will reinforce your answers. We show the image Nº 2: Parts of the breast.
Parts of the breast:

**Image Nº 2: Parts of the breast**

[Diagram of parts of the breast]

- **Lymph nodes:**
  Bean shaped structures located near the breast, in the axilla (under the arm), over the collarbone and the chest. Lymph nodes store white blood cells (named lymphocytes) which help fight infections and illnesses. The nodes are important to determine the stage of breast cancer and the likelihood of it extending to other parts of the body.

- **Lobes**
  Each breast has from 15 to 20 lobes, these are separated by fat tissue. Lobes are divided in lobules which form small branches that produce breast milk.

- **Ducts**
  These are the ducts of the mammary glands that transport milk in small quantities from the lobules to the nipple.

- **Fat tissue**
  Tissue that forms much of the breast content. The breast has a large amount of fat tissue internally, is forms 90% of its content and gives it its shape.
Session II. Recognizing normal changes and abnormalities in the breast

We say to the women: We have learned the parts of the breast and what they are used for. Now we will see the normal changes and abnormalities that can happen in the breasts. And we show the image Nº 3: Recognizing changes in breasts.

Image Nº 3: Recognizing changes in breasts

Recognizing changes in breasts

We then continue the theme saying:

“Throughout our lives, all women experience a variety of changes in the breast. It is important to know what is normal and how to recognize changes to be ALERT for any abnormality.”

Then, so that everyone can share their opinion, we will work in two groups discussing the question that we will give you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the normal changes you have experienced in your breasts throughout your lives?</td>
<td>What are the changes that are not normal and that women must recognize and be alert for?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We will provide the groups with paper and markers for them to write their answers down. After the groups have discussed and written their answers down, a representative presents the ideas they have discussed in each group. We carefully listen to their answers and emphasize the main ideas regarding each question. And we reinforce which are normal changes in the breast.

- Normal changes in the breast
  - During the adolescence we may feel pain; this is due to the growth and development of our breasts.
  - Swelling sensation of the breasts before and after our menstruation period.
  - Pain and burning sensation during the menstruation period; after this, the swelling reduces, and the breasts return to normal.
  - Increase of breast size during pregnancy.
  - Swelling, pain and burning sensation when breastfeeding a child; and the ducts fill with milk.

Session III. Early Detection of Breast Cancer

We then show image Nº 4: Breast cancer detection.
And to all the participants together we ask these questions:

- **What do you see in this image?**
- **What does this image mean to you?**
- **Do you know want to learn something more about breast cancer?**

We listen to what the participants say and after a few minutes we give a summary of what they have told us. At the end we say:

“Thank you for your responses and your questions about breast cancer. This shows me that you have a lot of interest. During the session we will answer all your questions and concerns and we will also explain what you need to know and how to detect breast cancer early”.

We then continue saying: now that we know we must be alert for breast cancer, you will speak in pairs (with the person next to you) and answer the following questions:

- Why is it necessary to detect breast cancer early?
- What do you know about breast cancer?
- How can breast cancer be prevented?
- Do we know anyone that has had or has breast cancer?

After discussing this in pairs, we will pay attention to what the participants state as their answers. We will write some main ideas of these answers on the flipchart. We will summarize the key points.

**Reinforcing knowledge:**

Breast cancer is a disease that is due to many risk factors; if it is detected early it can be cured. Today we are here today to learn about breast cancer, what we can do to protect our health, and what we can do to detect breast cancer early.

The most common site for breast cancer to develop is within the lobules (where milk is made) and ducts of the breast (where milk is delivered to the baby). In other parts of the breast, they can produce other types of lumps, not all of them are breast cancer, so it is important to do our checkups to be know what they are.

Dear community health agent: it is important, when discussing the topic that the participants touch their own breasts to locate what is described in image No. 2 (eg clavicle, fatty tissue).
Communication Dynamic

Objective: Participants shall interpret the importance of having an adequate communication that helps the facilitator transmit messages in the community.

THE TELEPHONE GAMES

The group is divided in two teams. They form rows and name who will lead each row. The facilitator gives the same message to the people leading the rows of each team; they need to whisper the message to the person behind them and all the people in the row should do the same until everyone has heard the message. The last participant of each row shall repeat the message out loud. This message is compared to the real message transmitted.

An example of a message: "Yesterday, there was an accident at Mrs. Maria's home. Her daughter Marcela was playing and fell, hitting herself strongly on her right foot."

At the end of the dynamic, the facilitator will carry out an analysis to see whether the final message is different from the initial one. The analysis states that messages usually change when parties do not pay attention or when they are not transmitted correctly.

We conclude by saying: "we must know how to listen and understand the messages in order to share them with other women and give them the correct message of what we have learned."
Module 2: Breast Cancer

What do we need?

• **Images:**
  - Image 5: What is Breast Cancer?
  - Image 6: Breast Cancer Warning Signs
  - Image 7: Risk based on Age
  - Image 8: Where should I go?
  - Image 9: Behaviors that affect breast cancer risk
  - Image 10: Breast cancer risk factors that are not related to behaviors
  - Image 11: How do we detect breast cancer?
  - Image 12: Clinical breast exam
  - Image 13: What is a mammogram?
  - Image 14: Why is it important to pick up results?
  - Image 15: Healthy Habits
  - Image 16: Together, we can prevent and control breast cancer
  - Image 17: Happy Family

• Flipcharts
• Markers
• Masking tape

What do we want to achieve?

• Women learn about breast cancer.
• Women can identify who has a greater risk of having breast cancer.
• Women know what to do and where to go in order to detect breast cancer in a timely manner.
• Women know the importance of having a trained health professional (physician, midwife and/or nurse) carry out a clinical breast exam.
• Women know how they can reduce the risk of having breast cancer.
Session I. Understanding breast cancer

We say:

“We have learned the normal changes that occur in breasts throughout the different stages of our life, and we also know the changes or alterations that may appear. We must be alert to the presence of any of them.”

We will learn about breast cancer, and we show image Nº 5: What is breast cancer?

Image No 5: What is breast cancer?

What is breast cancer?

We will ask the following questions in groups:

• **What have you heard about breast cancer?**

We will listen to the participants, and we write some main points and ideas on the flipchart paper to discuss and clarify.

Then we explain how cancer develops and that it is important to know that our body is made up of many cells. Normally these cells grow, reproduce and die as needed to keep us healthy.
However, sometimes this normal process does not occur, for different reasons. Instead of dying, cells grow and continue dividing when not necessary. So, cancer is the uncontrolled growth of diseased cells in our body that eventually will form a mass or tumor.

We will carry out an exercise to have a better understanding of cancer growth:

For this exercise we need a glass with water and liquid soap, a straw, and soy sauce or iodine drops.

After blowing bubbles with the straw in the water with liquid soap, point to the glass and say: “Imagine these are HEALTHY breast cells.”

We then remove a bubble with the help of a straw and say: “When the cell is healthy, it is born, grows, ages, reproduces and dies. It is eliminated by the body and then another cell replaces it.”

We then place some drops of soy sauce or iodine drops in the glass and start blowing slowly with the straw inside the glass, forming many bubbles.

We explain:

“However, in the case of breast cancer, the cells are sick and do not die, they stay there and grow in an uncontrolled manner, becoming cancer, and eventually a tumor”
Session II. Breast Cancer Warning Signs

Then we say:

“Recognizing your breasts helps detect breast changes, but it is NOT enough to detect breast cancer early. If you know what is normal for yourself, you can better explain to the health professional when you feel or see something different.” Recognizing changes in your breasts is NOT a substitute for a clinical breast exam that should be performed annually.

Then we show the participants image No 6: Breast cancer warning signs.

Image Nº 6: Breast cancer warning signs

We explain that it is important to keep in mind the normal changes that occur in the different stages of our lives, but it is also important to know the changes or alterations that can occur in the breasts.

- **Warning signs for breast cancer.**
  1. Appearance of a mass, solid ball or thicker skin inside the breast.
  2. Dimples or wrinkles in the skin.
  3. Change in the size and/or shape of the breast.
  4. Recent and persistent pain in any part of the breast.
5. Any secretion from the nipple that is not milk.
6. Swelling, heat, darkening or redness of the breast.
7. Sinking of the nipple or other parts of the breast.
8. Ulcers or scaly sores in the skin or rashes in the nipple.

Then we affirm:

“We should not wait for some warning sign to appear to go to the clinic, since when there are symptoms the breast cancer has already grown.”

**Session III. Identifying Women at Higher Risk**

Now that we know what breast cancer is, we ask everyone together:

- What causes breast cells to get sick and continue growing in an uncontrolled manner?
- Which women have a higher risk of developing breast cancer?

We listen to the opinions and answers from women and start writing them down on the flipchart. We show image Nº 7: Warning based on age.
“In order to understand the relationship between age and breast cancer, we can think of a traffic light. A young woman, without any warning signs, has a green light; she is not in much danger of having breast cancer and may continue her life in a normal manner. However, if a woman is over 40, even without warning signs, she has a red light, stating she shall be more alert and go to her breast cancer screening visit.”

“This disease is more frequent in women between 40 and 69 years old, although it can also occur in women outside this age range, so it is necessary to go to your health establishment for an evaluation every year if you present changes, even when you are not in this age group, to have a clinical breast exam.”

We then explain that there are characteristics that increase the risk of a woman developing breast cancer; among the most important ones we have the following:

• Being a woman.
• Being over 40 years old.
• The likelihood increases if a close relative, sister or mother, have had breast cancer.

And we state the following:

“Having a direct relative with breast cancer represents less than 10% increased likelihood for a woman to develop breast cancer”
Session IV. Importance of Early Detection

We ask the participants:

- How does a woman know that she is developing breast cancer?
- What is the woman going to feel and observe?

After listening to their answers, we summarize the main ideas and say:

“You also know how to identify abnormal changes in your breasts, signs and symptoms of illness in the breast to be alert, however that is not enough. We need to have an early detection of breast cancer and know that, initially, breast cancer does not give any sign a pain and the lump or mass may be in an area where we are not able to feel it.”

“That is why it is important to go to your nearest health facility to be evaluated by trained professionals (doctors, midwives, and nurses), even without breast discomfort.”

“Health professionals (physicians, midwives, and nurses) in the nearest health centers are trained to offer counseling in breast health and also breast exams.”

“If these professionals find anything, they will advise you of any other exams or referrals you may need.”

Then we continue, saying:
It may be a long period of time from when the breast cancer starts developing until it is detectable. As the tumor starts growing, it becomes more aggressive for our body and affects other organs.

“We state that we do not know the causes of breast cancer yet, although we do know that some risk factors are related to cancer appearing. In its early stages, breast cancer does not present any pain or discomfort.”

“This is why we should prioritize the clinical breast exam every year for women over 40, preferably during the same month. Any woman that presents any warning sign, independently of her age, or with a family history of breast cancer (especially mother, sister, aunt, grandmother) should go to a health center.”

We must be aware that we should not go to buy medicines without a prescription, at the pharmacy, if we present any discomfort in our breasts.

Session V. Breast Cancer Risk Factors

We now show them images related to breast cancer risk.

Image Nº 9: Behaviors that affect breast cancer risk

Behaviors that affect breast cancer risk

- Obesity
- Not doing physical exercise routinely
- Consumption of alcoholic beverages
- Tobacco use
- Use of oral contraceptives without supervision of a healthcare professional
- Use of hormonal therapy without medical indication
- Not having had children or not having breastfed
The risk of breast cancer is due to a combination of factors. That is why it is important to reduce the factors that can lead you to have breast cancer.

We ask the participants:

• What is a risk factor?
• Which are the risk factors that you can change?

We continue explaining the following:

The modifiable risk factors include:

• Obesity.
• Not doing physical exercise routinely.
• Consumption of alcoholic beverages. Tobacco use.
• Use of oral contraceptives without the supervision of a healthcare professional.
• Use of hormonal therapy without medical indication.
• Not having had children or not having breastfed.

Knowing these risk factors, we must consider that:

• We should not smoke, and we should stay away from those who smoke around us. Tobacco smoke is poison.
• Reduce consumption of soft drinks and alcohol.
• Breastfeeding is good for both mother and baby. Mothers who breastfeed their babies lower their risk of developing breast cancer.
• It is important to take care of our weight because excess fat in the body is associated with cancer.
• It is important to recognize the Body Mass Index (BMI). Here is the formula:

\[
\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{Weight (Kg)}}{\text{Height}^2 (\text{m})}
\]

Interpretación:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>18.5 - 24.9</td>
<td>Low risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight</td>
<td>25.0 - 29.9</td>
<td>Medium risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obese</td>
<td>30.00 o más</td>
<td>High risk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the following link, you can calculate your BMI:  
And we continue explaining the following:

The breast cancer risk factors that are not related to behaviors include:

- Being a woman.
- Age (40 years and older).
- Genetics – Family history (mother, sister, or daughter) with breast cancer.
- Early menarche (first menstruation before age 12).
- Late menopause (last menstrual period after age 50).

We must bear in mind that there are modifiable and non-modifiable risk factors that directly affect the development of breast cancer. It is up to us to control the risk factors that we can modify.
Session VI. How do we detect breast cancer?

“So, if we get used to having regular exams, we can detect breast cancer in time.”

To gather knowledge, we ask the following questions:

- What methods do you know are used to detect breast cancer?
- Have any of you had a clinical breast exam done?

We will listen carefully to the answers and ask a woman who has had the clinical breast exam done to voluntarily share their experience.

The following tests are used to detect breast cancer early:

- Clinical Breast Exam
- Mammogram
- Ultrasound & MRI (in some cases)
This clinical breast exam is done observing and palpation by a trained health professional (physician, midwife and/or nurse) with the goal of detecting any alteration in the breasts (masses, secretion, lesions, swelling).

- If the health professional finds any abnormality after performing the clinical breast exam, the woman will be referred to a specialized center for their follow-up.
- If the result of the clinical breast exam is normal, the professional will recommend a new control the following year.

The clinical breast exam is not painful, it does not cause any discomfort, it is quick, and the health professional will explain the procedure before performing it.

Who should go for a clinical breast exam?

- Women between 40 to 69 years old
- Any woman with breast discomfort

Who of you meet the age indicated to have a clinical breast exam?
"A mammogram is a photograph of the breast; this may detect very small lesions that hands are not able to feel. It is available in some hospitals in each region; and it is very useful."

"It is normal for you to feel FEAR, EMBARRASSMENT and CONCERN; because it may be a new and strange experience."
“After you have a mammogram the health professional will tell you a date when to pick up your results. Therefore it is important to go to the appointment on the specified date. By doing this, you may know if you have cancer or not and whether you have to start treatment as soon as possible.”

“Independent of whether you have a positive or negative result, the health provider will tell you what steps you need to take next. Remember that breast cancer can be cured, and it is easier to do so when it is at an early stage.”

Every person should have the right to universal health coverage.
Session VII. Healthy Habits

- Did you know that healthy habits decrease breast cancer risk?
- What healthy habits do you know about?

After listening to the participants' answers, we show the image No 15: Healthy Habits.

**Image N° 15: Healthy Habits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Healthy Habits</th>
<th>Eat fruits and vegetables</th>
<th>Do exercises regularly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

We explain that:

“Living and eating in a healthy manner may reduce the risk of having cancer.”

- We should eat many fruits, vegetables, cereals, beans, white meats (fish, turkey and chicken).
- We should exercise for at least 30 minutes a day. This means exercises that are tiring. An example is going up and down the stairs or dancing.

After the explanation, we ask the following questions:

- Which healthy habits do you practice?
- Can we incorporate one or more of these healthy habits in our lives?
Reflecting on what we have learned:

We explain that it is worth detecting breast cancer at an early stage and we ask the following questions:

- What can happen in the life of a woman with breast cancer?
- How important is a woman in the family?

We listen to what they say, and we reinforce their ideas by showing them image Nº 17: Happy Family and saying:

“We can avoid many of the problems that have been mentioned by detecting breast cancer early.”
“The benefits of early detection are:

- Noticeable increase in the likelihood of curing cancer.
- Women have better possibilities of survival.
- Treatments will be less painful for women.
- We may prevent the cancer from spreading to other organs of our body.
- Improvement in the quality of life of women and their families.”
Module 3: Reinforcing what has been learned and establishing commitments

Session I. Reinforcing what has been learned

To measure what they have learned the participants will carry out a dynamic called “COMPETITION FOR SURPRISES”.

Participants must stand and form a circle. The facilitator stands in the middle and offers a surprise for each person (folder papers with a message placed in a box). There shall be mixed messages, some are questions about modules and other instructions to make a gesture, sing, make a joke, etc.

There may be repeated messages or blank papers without a surprise. After each answered question, we ask the group to know if they are satisfied with the answer. If they say yes, we give a round of applause. If they say no, we make the correction.

Every participant must do what the message says and answer the question.

The surprises can be:

- What is breast cancer?
- Who are the women with a higher risk of having breast cancer?
- If a woman has pain in her breasts, does this mean there is no risk of having breast cancer?
- What are the risk factors for breast cancer?
- What screening visits must be performed on a woman over 40?
- Is it enough to have a self-examination done in order to know if the breasts are healthy?
- Are all women in risk of having breast cancer?
- Why is it important to have an early detection?
- Where can we have a clinical breast exam done?
- What is the first step to detect breast cancer on time?
- Who can perform a clinical breast exam?
- How frequently should women over 40 have a clinical breast exam done?
- How can we reduce the risk of breast cancer?
- What healthy habits can we include in our daily life in order to reduce the risk of breast cancer?
Interactive messages

- Walk down the catwalk.
- Say a joke.
- Sing a song.
- Say a compliment.
- Make a face.

Reflecting on what has been learned

We ask the women to sit down, close their eyes and we say the following:

“Think about a 20- to 25-year-old woman. Now imagine how this same woman when she is 40 or 50 years old, and she is diagnosed with breast cancer.”

- What would her reaction be?
- What will happen to her family?
- What support would they give her?
- What would you tell her to motivate her to follow-up with all her doctor appointments?

They are asked to open their eyes and a volunteer is asked to express what she was thinking about the questions asked.
Session II. Establishing commitments

We ask the group:

What can each of us commit to?

Motivate commitment:

• Get a clinical breast exam each year.
• Recognize risk factors in your family environment and suggest changes.
• Speak to other women regarding what you have learned.
• If there are women over 40 years of age in the family, encourage them to go to a health center and have a clinical breast exam performed.

Finally, we set a time to speak and see our progress with the commitments.

Closure

We appreciate the attendance and active participation of everyone, we say that they are now responsible for having a clinical breast exam every year and motivate their community to do so according to their age (40 – 69 years).
Module 4: Basic information to answer community questions regarding breast cancer

1. What is breast cancer? Who has a higher risk of having breast cancer?

   It is the ABNORMAL growth of breast cells that may form a malignant tumor and spread to other parts of the body (metastasis).
   
   • Women over the age of 40.
   • Women with direct relatives who have breast cancer (grandmother, mother, sister).
   • Women with risk factors: who smoke cigarettes or are near smokers, are overweight, frequently consume alcohol in excess, lack regular exercise.

2. How do we reduce breast cancer risk?

   • Consume more fruits, vegetables, beans, fish and cereals.
   • Avoid consumption of processed foods (sausages, fried foods, grilled meats, soft drinks).
   • Exercise for at least 30 minutes a day, walk, go up stairways, and practice a sport.
   • Maintain weight per height (remember the BMI calculator on page # 26 of this manual).
   • Do not smoke or allow anyone to smoke near you.
   • Use hormones only under medical supervision.

3. Why is it important to have a breast exam?

   Clinical breast assessments done by a trained health professional (physician, midwife, and/or nurse) is very important because it helps discover lumps or changes in our breasts therefore facilitating an adequate diagnosis and quick treatment.

4. What are the tests to detect breast cancer?

   • Clinical Breast Exam
   • Mammogram
   • Ultrasound and MRI (in some cases)
5. There are specific signs and symptoms that can make us suspect breast cancer, such as:

- Appearance of a lump or mass in the breast.
- Change in the size and shape of the breast.
- Itchiness in the skin or rash in the nipple.
- Secretion in one or both nipples.
- Swelling, heat, darkening or redness in the breast.
- Sinking of the nipple.
- Wrinkles on the skin of the breast.
- Recent and persistent pain in the breast.

“This is why it is important to visit your health center on a regular basis even without having any discomfort.”
References


