



Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Breast Health: What You Need to Know

Do you know the guidelines for getting screened for breast cancer? The American Cancer Society updated its recommendations last year:

- » **Ages 40 to 44:** Begin mammograms if you wish; discuss screening with your provider by age 40.
- » **Ages 45 to 54:** Get annual mammograms if you have average risk of breast cancer.
- » **Ages 55 and older:** Get mammograms once every 2 years or seek annual exams, depending on your risk.

Note: Women with a relative (parent, sibling or child) who had breast cancer may consider starting screening from ages 40 to 49.

Be sure to review your medical history and any other breast cancer risk factors with your health care provider. If you're in a high-risk group – based on gene mutations, a strong family history or other factors – ask your provider if more screening tests might be useful.

Factors that may RAISE RISK for breast cancer:

- » **Age** – the older a woman, or man, the higher the risk.
- » **Age at menopause** – after age 55, risk is about 30% higher than having menopause before age 45.
- » **Alcohol use** – women consuming 2 to 3 alcoholic drinks per day have a 20% higher risk than non-drinkers.
- » **Blood estrogen** – having higher levels after menopause.
- » **Family history** – having a first-degree relative who had breast, ovarian or prostate cancer.
- » **Genetic mutations** – including BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes.

Other factors that may slightly increase risk include: higher bone density after menopause; birth control pill use; estrogen-plus-progestin use; being overweight; and being Caucasian.



Factors that may LOWER RISK for breast cancer include: being physically active throughout life; maintaining a healthy weight; breastfeeding; consuming vegetables and fruits; and giving birth before age 35. Generally, the more children a woman has given birth to, the lower her risk tends to be.

Fit to the Core *By Charles Platkin, PhD*

Your core muscles act as a bridge between your upper and lower body. They include your abs, glutes, back, hips and chest. Strengthening your core helps you improve everyday movements, such as carrying groceries and maintaining an active, pain-free lifestyle.

Here are some exercises targeting your core muscles:

Bird Dog

1. Get on your hands and knees with your back flat.
2. Straighten your left leg to the rear and your right arm to the front and hold for a few seconds.
3. Return to starting position and do the same with the opposite arm and leg. Make sure to hold the position steady; 10 repetitions of each arm and leg.



Plank

1. Get on your hands and knees, with your hands a little more than shoulder-width apart and slightly in front of your shoulders.
2. Extend 1 leg at a time, balance on the balls of your feet as in the **up** part of a push-up. Keep your back parallel to the floor and your head and neck in line with your spine.
3. Hold for 15 to 60 seconds; 1 repetition.



Bridge

1. Lie on your back, with knees bent, feet flat and firmly on the floor, and hips and toes pointed forward.
2. Exhale as you squeeze your buttocks and tighten your lower abdominal muscles while lifting your hips and pelvis off the floor.
3. Inhale as you lower your pelvis and return to the starting position; 10 repetitions.



More core exercises: www.acefitness.org/acefit/fitness_programs_core_workout.aspx?workoutid=5.

Nutrition and the Common Cold

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD



A nutritious diet helps keep your immune system strong enough to help fight seasonal colds. First, replace processed foods with whole foods, including vegetables, fruit, whole grains, beans, nuts and fish. Here are some other suggestions for staying well during cold season.

Choose vegetables and fruit with vitamin C. Enjoy sweet peppers, strawberries, kiwi, oranges and broccoli. You need about 200 mg of vitamin C per day, easily available, from foods instead of supplements – aim for at least 2 cups of fruit and 2½ cups of vegetables daily. Some studies show that vitamin C may slightly reduce cold symptoms and duration, but it needs to be in your diet daily, not just when cold symptoms start.



Stay hydrated. If you do get a cold, drinking plenty of fluids can help provide relief. Sip broth, tea and lots of water. Beverages help replace fluids lost during mucus production. Some people swear by chicken soup; it may act as an anti-inflammatory and speed movement of mucus through the nose, which relieves congestion.

It's a myth: Drinking milk during a cold does **not** produce more phlegm, according to research. Ultimately it's about personal preference, so drink the beverage that makes you feel the best.

Q: Expired medications – how hazardous?

A: Drug manufacturers must guarantee the safety and effectiveness of medications up to the expiration date.

After that time, some medications lose potency very quickly and others more slowly.

Deteriorating drugs may not work as intended to treat health conditions.

Even a small decrease in effectiveness can create severe problems. In rare instances, expired medications can degrade into toxins.

Before taking an expired medication, first check with your pharmacist or health care provider. Certain medications should never be used past their expiration dates while others can.

Additional dangers of expired or unused medications: Children and pets may eat them by mistake. People who take someone else's prescription may suffer adverse effects. Leftover painkillers and addictive medications also contribute to the growing problem of prescription drug addiction.

To avoid these problems, here are options to properly dispose of medications:

- » Follow disposal instructions on the label or patient information.
- » Mix the medicine with an undesirable substance such as kitty litter or used coffee grounds, put it in a sealable plastic bag, and throw it away in the trash. Dispose of the container separately after blacking out personal information.
- » Go to a **National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day** event hosted by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).
- » Take the medicine to a DEA-authorized collection site or ask your pharmacist about disposal. – Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP



“This became a credo of mine: Attempt the impossible in order to improve your work.” – Bette Davis

Caregiver's Checklist

Many of us have or will become primary caregivers of a parent or loved one. Here are some skills that can make life easier for you:

- Be candid with your loved one.** If possible, talk about your role and make sure you both understand the concerns and expectations of each other.
- Understand your patient's health condition.** With a health care provider's guidance, learn how to ensure proper nutrition, help your loved one move about and function safely, and recognize potential signs of trouble.
- Delegate.** To free up your time – a must – get regular commitments from family. Enlist trusted friends and others to do chores so you can get out for a day.
- Monitor prescription and over-the-counter medications vigilantly.** Maintain an inventory of your patient's drugs and supplements. Keep a daily record of doses and times given and review it regularly with care providers.
- Identify nearby caregiver services** that offer respite care and group support activities.
- Nurture your body and mind.** Adequate rest is primary. Get exercise, fresh food and fresh air daily. For 15 minutes every few hours, relax and renew through meditation, stretching or prayer.



Help is here: Check out **25 Organizations that Take Care of Caregivers** at www.asaging.org/blog/25-organizations-take-care-caregivers.



Smart Moves toolkit is at www.personalbest.com/extras/16V10tools.

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