

Women's Cancer Myths

Written by Valecia Weeks, CPT, LMT
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WOMEN'S CANCER MYTHS



Pssst! Are you making health decisions based on incorrect or outdated information? If you are, make this your final day for doing so. Make sure you are making your health choices based on sources that are current and accurate. Also, always check with your health care provider if you have any questions or concerns about living a healthier life.

YOU, not your mama ,sister, or girlfriend, can take very simple steps on a daily basis to protect yourself against illness and disease. First and far most, it is very important to get appropriate health screenings to find potential health problems early on and seek proper treatment to prevent more serious problems later. Remember knowledge is power and ignorance is not bliss. Below are a few myths that we as women have been convinced to believe in,

Myth: Cancer cannot be prevented.

Fact: Scientists estimate that as many as 50 percent or more of cancer deaths in the United States are caused by social and environmental conditions and unhealthy choices. These conditions and choices can result in an unhealthy diet, obesity, or unhealthy human behaviors such as smoking and physical inactivity. We now know more about how to prevent many cancers including cancers of the lung, cervix, colon, rectum, and skin.

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Cervical Cancer

- Cervical cancer can usually be prevented if women are screened regularly at least every three years with the Pap test. Don't stop there, ask your health care provider for a HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) test also. Both tests can find abnormal cells in the cervix. These cells may, over time, turn into cancer, and could take many years to happen. HPV the sexually transmitted disease, which can cause cervical cancer, can lie dormant for several years. If the results of a Pap test show there are abnormal cells that could become cancerous, a woman can be treated. In most cases, this treatment prevents cervical cancer from developing.

- Abnormal cells in the cervix and cervical cancer don't always cause symptoms, especially at first. That's why getting tested for cervical cancer is important, even if there are no symptoms.

Breast Cancer

- Some researchers estimate that a fourth to a third of breast cancers in postmenopausal women may be due to physical inactivity which sometimes result in being overweight and obese.

- Mammography is the best available method to detect breast cancer in its earliest, most treatable stage— an average of 1 to 4 years before a woman can feel a lump. Women aged 40 years or older should have a screening mammogram every 1 to 2 years.

- Maintain a healthy weight. Limiting weight gain during childhood and adulthood is likely to reduce the risk of breast cancer. Losing weight if overweight may also reduce risk.

- Regular physical activity is likely to reduce the risk of breast cancer.

In general, the factors that can help prevent cancer include not smoking cigarettes or using other tobacco products, avoiding second hand smoke, drinking a minimum amount of alcohol, avoiding weight gain as well as maintaining a healthy weight, eating five or more daily servings of fruits and vegetables, and very importantly being physically active.

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