



Jeb Bush
Governor

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Secretary, Department of Health

PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Early Detection Saves Lives
Breast Cancer Awareness Month

More than 211,000 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed this year in the U.S. Thankfully, progress in technology helps doctors find the disease earlier. And the sooner breast cancer is detected, the less likely a woman will need invasive and uncomfortable treatments, and the more likely she will survive. As a result, breast cancer survivors make up the largest group of cancer survivors.

Mammography screening is the best method of early detection. Therefore, women over age 40 should get an annual mammogram. A clinical examination by a health professional should be done yearly.

You can take charge of your breast health by performing a breast self-exam every month and understanding your personal risks of the disease – and reporting any breast change promptly to your health care provider.

Special populations at risk for breast cancer include minority and older women.

- African-American women have a higher breast cancer death rate than women of any other racial or ethnic population.
- Many women over the age of 60 feel that screening for breast cancer isn't necessary. On the contrary, women over 60 are more at risk, not less, for breast cancer.

Women 20 years and over should do a monthly breast self-exam, and have their breasts checked once a year by a health care professional. Women over age 40 should have a mammogram once a year.

Regular breast self-exams, combined with an annual exam by a doctor, improves the chances of detecting cancer early.

Breast Self Exam (BSE)

Examining your breasts every month is an important way to find a breast cancer early, when it's most likely to be cured. Not every cancer can be found this way, but it is an important step you can, and should, take for yourself.

The more you examine your breasts, the more you will learn about them and the easier it will become for you to tell if something unusual has occurred. BSE is an essential part of taking care of yourself and reducing your risk of breast cancer.

- Get in the habit of doing a BSE once a month (post a note on your calendar to help remember). Examine yourself several days after your period ends, when your breasts are least likely to be swollen and tender. If you are no longer having periods, choose a day that's easy to remember, such as the first or last day of the month.
- Don't panic if you think you feel a lump. Most women have some lumps or lumpy areas in their breasts all the time. Eight out of ten breast lumps that are removed are benign, non-cancerous.
- The upper, outer area – near your armpit – tends to have the most noticeable lumps. The lower half of your breast can feel like a sandy or pebbly beach. The area under the nipple can feel like a collection of large grains. Another part might feel like a lumpy bowl of oatmeal.

(MORE)

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH – Page 2



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What's important is that you get to know the look and feel of your breasts. Has anything changed? Tell your doctor about any changes in your breasts that last over a full month's cycle, or seem to get worse or more obvious over time.

The Pinellas County Health Department's Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Program provides free breast and cervical cancer screening exams – including mammograms, Pap smears and pelvic and clinical breast exams – to women 50 to 64 years of age (low income, uninsured or under-insured). Please call (727) 824-6917 to schedule an appointment.

For more info, call us at (727) 824-6917 or visit www.cancer.org

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The mission of the Pinellas County Health Department is to promote, protect and improve the health and safety of our community through public and private partnerships in an environment that respects diversity. www.PinellasHealth.com