

## Module 5: Breast Cancer

### Review the Objectives (Time Frame: 10 minutes)

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- Define breast cancer.
- Know the risk factors, detection methods, and treatment options for breast cancer.
- Understand the American Cancer Society's recommendations for reducing the risk of breast cancer.
- Understand how to take preventative steps to reduce the risk of developing breast cancer.

### Worksheets/Handouts

- *Overview: Breast Cancer* fact sheet ([www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org))
- *Breast Cancer: A Resource Guide for Minority Women* ([www.4women.gov/minority/africanamerican/bc.cfm](http://www.4women.gov/minority/africanamerican/bc.cfm))
- *Screening Mammograms: Questions and Answers* ([www.4women.gov/minority/africanamerican/bc.cfm](http://www.4women.gov/minority/africanamerican/bc.cfm))

### Materials/Resources

- Blackboard/chalk or dry erase board
- Pens or pencils
- Notepads or extra paper
- Internet access

Welcome the participants. Tell them that today's module will focus on developing a clear understanding of breast cancer.

### Overview

Open the session by discussing the following points:

- Breast cancer is a cancerous tumor that develops in the breast.
- Most breast lumps are non-cancerous.
- Early detection is important because the cancer can spread if it is not treated at its earliest stages.

- Breast cancer is less common in African-American women than in white women, except in the case of women under 40. Young African-American women have higher rates of the disease than do young white women. But even though African-American women overall are less likely to get breast cancer, they are more likely to die from it. Breast cancer is the most common cancer among African-American women. More than 5,800 African-American women died from breast cancer in 2007.

You may find it helpful to copy the cancer points onto a PowerPoint slide so that the participants can follow along as you discuss the points. You could also copy and paste the points into a Microsoft Word document and pass them out to the participants. A detailed overview of breast cancer can be found on the American Cancer Society's Web site at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

### Who Is At Risk?

- Women. Breast cancer is over 100 times more common in women than in men.
- Older women. Approximately 77 percent of women with breast cancer are diagnosed at the age of 50 or older. Lifetime exposure to reproductive hormones like estrogen may increase the risk.
- Those having a mother, sister, or daughter with breast cancer.
- Those with dense breast tissue.
- Those who have never had children or who had their first live birth after the age of 30.
- Women who started their monthly periods before the age 12.
- Women who started menopause after the age 55.
- Women who took more than five years of postmenopausal estrogen replacement therapy.
- Women who drink alcohol, especially two or more drinks a day.
- Obese women.
- Physically inactive women.

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### Detection Methods

Nearly all breast cancers can be successfully treated if detected early.

Early detection methods include:

- Annual mammograms beginning at age 40. A mammogram is the best method for detecting breast cancer because often it can identify cancer before physical symptoms develop.
- Annual clinical breast exams by a doctor or nurse.
- Monthly breast self-exams.

### Treatment

Often two or more treatment methods are used. Patients should thoroughly discuss treatment options with their doctors.

- Breast conservation surgery. This surgery removes only the tumor and surrounding tissue.
- Mastectomy. This surgery removes the breast.
- Chemotherapy. This option uses anticancer drugs that attack cancer cells and normal cells. The drugs are usually given by injection or taken by mouth.
- Hormone therapy. This refers to treatment with hormones or drugs that interfere with hormone production.
- Monoclonal antibody therapy. This uses substances that find cancer cells and bind to them. It can be used alone or to deliver drugs, toxins, or radioactive material directly to tumor cells.
- Radiation therapy. This treatment uses high-energy rays to shrink or kill cancer cells.

### What Can You Do About It?

- Get annual mammograms starting at age 40.
- Get a clinical breast exam by a health professional:
  - Every three years for women ages 20 to 39.
  - Annually for women age 40 or older.
- Conduct breast self-exams beginning at age 20.
- Talk with your doctor about when to start screening if you have a family history of breast cancer.

- Maintain a healthy weight throughout life.
- Adopt a physically active lifestyle.
- Eat a healthy diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- Limit alcohol consumption.
- Be aware of the symptoms and early signs:
  - The most common sign of breast cancer is a new lump or mass.
  - Generalized swelling of part of a breast (even if no distinct lump is felt)
  - Skin irritation or dimpling
  - Nipple pain or retraction (turning inward)
  - Redness or scaliness of the nipple or breast skin
  - Discharge other than breast milk

### Suggested Activities (Time frame: 25 minutes)

#### Activity 1 – Helping Ourselves So We Can Help Others

Pass out *Overview: Breast Cancer* fact sheet and *Breast Cancer: A Resource Guide for Minority Women*. Review the key points of the documents, emphasizing the causes, risk factors, prevention, and treatment information.

#### Activity 2 – Prevention is Key

Pass out *Screening Mammograms: Questions and Answers*, a notepad, and a pen to each participant. Ask participants to review the information. Discuss the common questions and answers on screening mammograms, and ask them to discuss ways to increase annual screenings among African-American women. Ask participants to think of ways to encourage their family members, friends, congregation, and community to receive regular mammograms.

Remind participants that what they eat and drink, how they live, and where they work can affect their risk for cancer. Encourage them to read more about the risk factors. Write the most common risk factors on the

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board. Ask participants to discuss realistic ways to minimize their risks for developing breast cancer.

### Activity 3 – Getting the Church Involved

Form a committee to work with the pastor and church ministerial staff to adopt Pink Ribbon Sunday. The Food and Drug Administration, American Cancer Society, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention developed pink Ribbon Sunday to recognize Breast Cancer Awareness Month (October). The program encourages minority churches to educate their congregations about the use of mammography equipment as an early breast cancer detection tool. Churches can develop their own activities, from hosting inspirational guest speakers, to setting up table displays and providing educational materials.

### Reflections (Time frame: 10 minutes)

Ask participants to announce any behavioral changes they have made since the last session that may reduce their risk of cancer. Ask one or two participants to share their experience of trying out the tips. Was it easy or difficult? If anyone had problems with the tips, why do they think that it didn't go as planned? What could they have done differently? As you listen to the answers from the participants, ask other participants if they have suggestions to overcome barriers. If participants do not offer suggestions, offer your own.

Allow time for questions and comments about the topics discussed in the session today.

### Where Can I Get Additional Information?

National Breast Cancer Coalition

Telephone: 1-800-622-2838

Web site: [www.stopbreastcancer.org](http://www.stopbreastcancer.org)

National Cancer Institute (NCI)

Telephone: 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)

Web site: [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

Susan G. Komen for the Cure

Telephone: 1-800-IM-AWARE (1-800-462-9273)

Web site: [www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org)

Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization

Telephone: 1-800-221-2141 (English), 1-800-986-9505 (Spanish)

Web site: [www.y-me.org](http://www.y-me.org)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) DES Update

Telephone: 1-800-232-4636

Web site: [www.cdc.gov/des](http://www.cdc.gov/des)

The National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program provides free or low-cost breast cancer testing to women who don't have health insurance. To learn more about this program, please contact the Centers for Disease Control at 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636).

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### How Can I Get Involved?

#### *Reach to Recovery*<sup>®</sup>

Reach to Recovery<sup>®</sup> are programs that support women who are interested in learning more about how to detect and treat breast cancer. The American Cancer Society also provides information on breast cancer and other forms of cancer, as well as services to support cancer patients and their families. Contact the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345 for additional information. You may also view information online at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

#### *Making Strides Against Breast Cancer*<sup>®</sup>

Making Strides Against Breast Cancer<sup>®</sup> is a noncompetitive walk to help fight breast cancer and provide hope to people facing the disease. Your participation will support the American Cancer Society's lifesaving research, prevention, early detection, and support programs for thousands of patients and their families. Contact the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345 for additional information. You may also view information online at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

#### *Daffodil Days*<sup>®</sup>

Daffodil Days<sup>®</sup> is one of the American Cancer Society's oldest and most beloved fundraising programs. As the first flower of spring, the daffodil represents hope and renewal. By giving daffodils to friends, family members, local businesspeople, and even cancer patients, you are really giving hope by enabling the Society to offer free programs and services to improve the lives of people facing cancer. Contact the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345 for additional information. You may also view information online at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

